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HEROINES OF FREETHOUGHT.



HEROINES  
OF  
FREETHOUGHT.

BY  
SARA A. UNDERWOOD.

*“To reject consecrated opinions needs a consecrated mind. The moving impulse to such rejection is faith; faith in reason, faith in the mind's ability to obtain truth.”—*  
O. B. FROTHINGHAM.

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## PREFACE.

THE word Freethinker in times past has implied a censure of the person so designated, and especially if the one so called chanced to be a woman. But, in spite of this fact, here and there in the history of Freethought has appeared a woman strong enough of heart and brain to understand and accept Liberal truths, and brave enough to avow publicly her faith in the "belief of the unbelievers." Among these courageous souls we find the names of some of the most brilliant lights of feminine literature. The Orthodox world could not well afford to reject their valuable contributions to the pleasure and well-being of society, but in accepting them did so with an ungracious protest against the religious conclusions of these daring Thinkers.

To-day we stand at the opening of a grand vista of civil and religious liberty. Science has sealed as the truth many of the hitherto vague questionings of those who, in honest search of the truth, had long ago come to doubt creeds and dogmas. In time to come they who first dared to pioneer the way to perfect freedom of thought will be looked upon as the benefactors of those whom at first they only shocked. Among these benefactors must be counted the isolated women whose life-sketches make up this little volume. In selecting the subjects for these sketches, regard was had only to the thorough Radicalism of the views they held. There are many noble women of Liberal tendencies of thought, whose names are well known, who have done good and effective work for Freethought so far as they understood it; but the most of these have only succeeded in throwing aside creeds and all sectarianism, as belittling and cramping to the human mind, while still clinging to all the essential points of Christian belief.

Many of these women have already found, as they deserve, faithful and loving chroniclers. To introduce their names here would only serve to swell this volume far beyond its present modest dimensions, and would render it useless as a record of the most daring heroines of Freethought; so I have contented myself with sketching these few central female figures in the history of Radical Religion. And my only hope in grouping them thus together is to win for them, from those to whom they are comparatively unknown, save as names only, a little of the admiration and respect which I myself have ever felt for them because of the dignity and moral heroism of their lives.

*June*, 1876.

S. A. U.



MADAME ROLAND.



# HEROINES OF FREETHOUGHT.

## MADAME ROLAND.

“**D**IVINITY! Supreme Being! Spirit of the Universe! Great Principle of all I feel great or good or immortal within myself—whose existence I believe in because I must have emanated from something superior to that by which I am surrounded—I am about to reunite myself to thy essence.”

Such was the invocation which Madame Roland addressed to the Deity she worshiped, at a time when, death by violence seeming unavoidable, she contemplated defeating the cruel guillotine by suicide. There is in it, as in all the acts of her life, the undaunted tone of the truly brave in spirit. Conscious of her own nobility of soul, there is in it no mock humility, no

cowardly trusting to the blood of an innocent person to save her from the consequences of her own acts, no weak doubts expressed as to her own merit; only a sublime confidence in the infinite tenderness and love of the God she worshiped—the God who grew to her more all-pervading, more all-absorbent, and more grandly just and wise, as she herself grew broader in intellect and larger in heart.

Marie Jeanne Phlipon, daughter of the drunken engraver, child of the people, wife of the just and conscientious philosopher Roland—in thee we find our ideal woman, as Christendom finds in Jesus its ideal man! Virtuous, loving, lovely, intellectual, self-sacrificing woman, could any Christ live an holier life, or die more nobly than thou didst? As he was put to death by a rude rabble because of his brave utterance of pure principles, so also wast thou. If his crucifixion was a more protracted bodily anguish, the horrible outlines of the blood-begrimed guillotine were no less terrible to

thee ; while death for him severed no such near and dear human ties as for thee, whose love for husband and child was deep and strong as thine own nature. His tears of anguish in the garden of Gethsemane were not more bitter than thine in the secrecy of thy gloomy prison cell ; nor didst thou weakly ask watchers to share those hours of anguished renunciation. Pathetic as his “Father, forgive them !” is thy sorrowful “O Liberty, what crimes are committed in thy name !”

The coming woman—our ideal—can never come in nobler guise than that of Madame Roland. Uplifted by the force of her pure moral character even above the sanguinary waves of that “Reign of Terror”—waves which left their defacing stain upon many of the fairest names that flashed meteor-like across that dismal panorama—the worst which even her Christian biographers have found to say of her is, that she was morally brave enough to avow herself a Deist. Philip and Grace Wharton, in their “Queens of Soci-

ety," while confessing that "from Cartesian, Madame Roland became Stoic, from Stoic Deist, and from that she never returned," are candid enough to add that "her life was morally faultless." Another Christian writer says of her, "the only God she invoked was the future. A species of abstract and stoical duty, itself its own judge and reward, supplied the place with her of hope, consolation, or piety."

Here, then, in the person of a pure, conscientious, liberty-loving, and historical woman, we find the refutation of the prevalent idea, that perfection of moral character is dependent on a belief in Christianity. Nor was she one to accept any belief unadvisedly. Sincere and earnest in her convictions, she did not, however, trust solely to those convictions without thorough investigation. Loving truth, as her life testified, more than she loved life itself, hers was a character which with less intellectual vigor had been that of a fanatical religious devotee. In early youth, when

conscience obeyed to the extreme the dictates of education, she was indeed that; but later her reason and intellect grew strong enough to grapple with and overcome the mysteries of credulity: she could not and cared not to stifle the voice of her intellectual convictions, and bravely avowed them to the world. She who bore for her husband the heaviest burden of the cares of State; who instigated, urged, and upheld him in his most daring measures; who rose equal to all the strange and tragic emergencies which her daring leadership of the purest party of that troubled time thrust upon her; who kept herself and her good name pure and unblemished in the midst of a revolutionary whirl of corruption and general laxity of morals—this woman was not surely one to be either frightened or cajoled into acceptance of the bugbears of a popular belief.

Marie Jeanne Phlipon, born in Paris sometime in 1754, was the only living child of seven, and was therefore the object of much

love and care to her parents. Her father, Graticn Phlipon, by trade an engraver, was an ambitious, frivolous, and discontented man. Her mother, a pure-minded, large-hearted woman, possessing rare worth and intelligence, early instilled into the mind of her child those principles of conscientious virtue which afterward added such lustre to the genius of that child—which made her strong and brave in the face of a terrible death, and which made hers the purest public character developed by the Revolution of '93.

Although the little "Manon" (a pet name for Marie) was from earliest childhood extremely fond of study, and anxious to devote most of her time to her books, yet Madame Phlipon, with a discretion rare in the mother of an only and idolized child, did not allow these to engross her mind to the exclusion of household duties and moral lessons. She was also taught by her father, at a very early age, the art of engraving, and was encouraged to exhibit her proficiency therein by preparing with her own

hand small engravings as birthday gifts to her friends. Still, in spite of these cautious restraints upon her inordinate thirst for knowledge, she was at eighteen well versed in many things not generally included in the education of her sex—history, philosophy, chemistry, the languages, and mathematics, in addition to the graceful accomplishments usually taught her sex.

As a child she was ardent, enthusiastic, devout, and studious, with a firm will, and vivid imagination. History was her favorite reading, and to her perusal of Plutarch's "Lives," at nine years of age, she ascribes her first admiration and adoption of republican principles. But these principles would more likely be awakened in the mind of a proud, sensitive, and thoughtful nature, like hers, by the social inequalities and injustices which at that time existed in France, than by the perusal of any book, though the book might help define the unformed thought. The writings of Rousseau were already discussed with freedom by all classes in France,

and his republican views accepted by many as the true theory of government. That personal feeling had something to do with her admiration of a free government the following incident will show :

When about twelve years old she accompanied her mother on a visit to a relative who occupied some menial position in the palace at Versailles. After a day or two there, Manon was asked by her mother if she enjoyed being in a palace. Stung with a feeling of humiliation, which the distinction of rank exhibited there caused her, she replied with passionate vehemence, "I like it, if it be *soon ended*, for, else, in a few more days, I shall so much detest all the persons I see, that I should not know what to do with my hatred!"

"Why, what harm have they done you?" inquired her mother in surprise.

"They have made me feel injustice and look upon absurdity," was her reply.

A thoughtful, conscientious child, she began at a very early age to give much

attention to matters of religion, and when only eleven years of age was sent to a convent at her own urgent desire, where for several years she remained as a pupil. Here her mind applied itself with all its intense ardor to the study of the Catholic religion. She read with great delight the "Lives of the Saints," and entertained serious thoughts of taking the veil. To this devout frame of mind at that time may probably be ascribed the clearness with which at a riper age she was enabled to detect the shams and frauds of that same faith.

Lamartine describes her as possessing, at the age of eighteen, "a tall and supple figure, a modest and becoming demeanor; black and soft hair; blue eyes, which appeared brown in the depths of their reflection; the nose of a Grecian statue; a rather large mouth, with splendid teeth; a skin marbled with the animation of life, and veined by blood which the least impression sent mounting to her cheeks; a

tone of voice which borrowed its vibrations from the deepest fibers of her heart."

With such charms of person, added to the expectation of a not inconsiderable fortune, it was not strange that Mademoiselle Phlipon was soon surrounded with applicants for her hand; but among them all she failed to perceive the ideal hero-husband of her imagination, and she dismissed them one after the other, even the most eligible, with a *nonchalance* which nearly drove her father to despair, for he was anxious to see her settled in life, the wife of some wealthy tradesman.

But Manon, with a good home, many friends, her books, and a free heart, was in no hurry to marry, and her life went on happily and joyously until in 1775 her first real sorrow came to her in the death of her tender, loving mother, to whom she was passionately devoted, and her grief at the death of this dear friend was such as to prostrate her on a bed of sickness and for a while threatened to destroy her reason or

her life. But her youth and strength conquered this violent grief in the end, and she recovered.

It was soon after this event that she was first introduced, through her most intimate friend, to M. Roland de la Platiere, Inspector of Manufactures at Lyons, a man of strict probity and high scholastic attainments. He came to Paris on a visit, bearing a letter of introduction from her friend to Mademoiselle Phlipon.

M. Roland, though more than twenty years her senior, and with a heart hitherto untouched by womanly charms, was so attracted by her rare genius, her beauty, and her purity of character that he very soon besought her hand in marriage. She referred him dutifully to her father. M. Phlipon, who had become since the death of his wife reckless, dissipated, and savage, returned to M. Roland's letter a rude and contemptuous negative reply. His daughter's home life had been for some time rendered extremely unhappy through M. Phlipon's harshness,

debauchery and improvidence. He had also made sad inroads upon the fortune left her by her mother; her expostulations were met with anger and injustice on his part, and after his rudeness to M. Roland—a rudeness which had deeply wounded the feelings of that gentleman—she decided that it was useless to attempt to live with him in peace, and she retired from home, hiring rooms in a convent, where she lived for six months alone. At the end of that time M. Roland sought her out, and renewed his proposals of marriage. They were married in the winter of 1779, she being then twenty-five years of age, while he was forty-seven.

Previous to her marriage she had already dabbled in literature, and had written and published occasional criticisms and essays, among others one on a subject proposed by the Academy of Besancon, “How Can the Education of Women Conduce to the Education of Men?” But for some years after her marriage her writing was confined mainly to copying, translating, and correcting ar-

ticles for the "Dictionary of Manufactures," upon which M. Roland was engaged. This dry and tiresome labor undertaken to assist her husband was afterward, she remarks, of decided benefit to her in strengthening her style and in teaching her to systematize and arrange her own thoughts for publication.

For the first ten years of her married life, few events worthy of note occurred to her. Her own distaste for fashionable society, together with the studious habits of her husband, caused them to live upon their estate in a secluded and retired manner. A few choice friendships were formed, and the birth of their only child, a little girl named Eudora, brought happiness to the hearts of both.

In 1784, the monotony of this quiet life—a life which she sometimes felt to be almost unendurably quiet—was broken up temporarily by a trip to England and to Switzerland—a tour which she enjoyed intensely, embodying the observations made during its progress in a book of travel.

Her father, M. Phlipon, died during the winter of 1787. She had been ever a dutiful daughter to him, as an extract from her memoirs proves:

“My father,” she writes, “neither married, nor made any *very* ruinous engagements. We paid a few debts he had contracted, and, by granting him an annuity, prevailed upon him to leave a business in which it had become impossible for him to succeed. Though suffering so much for his errors, and though he had reason to be highly satisfied with our behavior, his spirit was too proud not to be hurt at the obligations he owed us.”

In 1789, events preceding the Revolution had thrown France into a state of ferment. Every one in whose soul one spark of the divine fire of liberty burned felt himself forced to take an interest and a part in the events and politics of the times. Political meetings were held over all France, and the slow-burning fires of insurrection and revolution broke out here and there into

sudden and no - longer - to - be repressed flame.

Among the first to declare themselves admirers and advocates of a new and republican form of government, as a panacea for the national distress, were M. and Madame Roland. In the prospective downfall of Royalty in France they beheld glorious visions of another France, a new American Republic, a republic void of aristocratical distinctions, where merit and not rank should demand and receive homage.

Madame Roland, filled with enthusiastic energy, wrote from Lyons to the Paris journals political letters of the most radical stamp, thus unwittingly helping to kindle the blaze which lit her own funeral pyre. But in joining the Revolutionists she had declared, "We must be ready for everything, even to die without regret!" Whatever may have been the mistakes which made the French Revolution so terrible a failure, it is certain that most of its original leaders were at first animated by only the purest

and most devoted patriotism and love of liberty.

From the letters written by Madame Roland at this time I cannot forbear quoting a few brave sentences :

“If we do not die for liberty, we shall soon have nothing left to do but to weep for her. Do you say we dare no longer speak?—Be it so. We must *thunder* then!”

“The insolence of the rich and the misery of the people excite my hatred against injustice and oppression, and I no longer ask for anything but the triumph of truth and the success of the Revolution.”

“I am glad there is danger. I see nothing else capable of goading you on. It is impossible to rise to freedom from the midst of corruption without strong convulsions. They are the salutary crises of a serious disease.”

It was through these letters, ablaze with the passionate fire of the love of liberty, that she first became known to the liberal party as the radiant priestess of that liberty.

M. Roland was sent as Deputy Extraordinary to the Constituent Assembly at Paris in 1791, whither Madame Roland accompanied him on the 20th of February. Here she attended daily the sittings of the Assembly and watched with earnest anxiety every movement of that body. So earnest and enthusiastic was their belief in the free future of France, and so zealously did they disseminate their views, that the modest dwelling of the Rolands soon became the headquarters and rendezvous of the leading patriots, where those who afterward became the chiefs of the Revolution consorted to discuss their views and mature their plans. Here, also, at first, those met as friends and co-laborers who afterward became bitter enemies. Robespierre, Danton, Vergniaud, Brissot, and Condorcet, shared alike at this time in the friendship and confidence of Madame Roland. Still, though her soul was afire with patriotic flame, her true womanly modesty asserted itself at these meetings. While Roland and the others discussed the

leading topics of the day, she sat silently by, apparently engaged with her writing or her embroidery, speaking only when her advice was asked or judgment appealed to; but her few words were always direct, strong, and inspiring.

Quiet, modest, but quick-thoughted and energetic, led on by the deep interest she felt in the affairs of the nation, Madame Roland soon, almost unconsciously to herself, became the life and leader of the Girondists, the party of impetus at that time, but afterward, under Robespierrean rule, the party of moderation.

But this leadership, dangerous to most women as it would have been, was yet not so to her pure soul. Beautiful as she was, and loose as was the morality of that period, no thought, much less word, of evil, was associated with her name. Men who had hitherto looked upon women only as the pretty sensuous playthings of an hour met this woman forgetful of her sex, in the deep interest of the questions of the

day. Looking into the lovely changeful eyes, they saw therein only the fire of high resolve; they gazed upon the perfect form, and remembered only that it was animated by the spirit of liberty; they clasped firmly the white shapely hands with no thought of their dainty beauty, but knowing only that they worked right earnestly in defense of their mutual rights. A common danger threatened, a common sympathy joined them, and the baser parts of their natures were hushed into silence before the nobler qualities of humanity evoked by the needs of the hour.

In September, the Rolands returned again to Lyons, but only for a few months, for M. Roland's office as Inspector of Manufactures having been annulled by a law of the Assembly, they decided to return at once to Paris, for the double purpose of obtaining greater facilities for the prosecution of his labor on the Encyclopædia and of watching more closely the progress of events.

In March, 1792, Roland was chosen Minister of the Interior, in order to conciliate the malcontents, but he continued in that office only until the following June. On the 11th of June, having read before the king that famous letter of remonstrance to Louis XVI, said to have been written by Madame Roland, he was dismissed the next day from his office. That the people might understand the reason of his removal, Roland read this letter before the National Convention. Filled as it was with bold republican truths, its publication still further inflamed the people against the king, and popularized Roland; and when, after the terrible 10th of August, Royalty in France was for the time being put an end to, he was recalled under the new administration, and reinstated in the Ministry.

True to their principles, M. and Madame Roland did not allow any change of station to alter the republican simplicity of their manners. She paid no visits and received only those visitors whom her husband's pub-

lic position and duties obliged her to receive. By the adoption of this course, she found time for her studies, and to remodel and enliven, if she did not originate, many of the State papers which appeared over Roland's signature.

In regard to this phase of her life, Carlyle writes of her thus : "Envious men insinuate that the wife of Roland is Minister, not the husband. It is, happily, the worst they have to charge her with. For the rest, let whose head soever be getting giddy, it is not this brave woman's. Serene and queenly here, as she was of old in her own hired garret of the Ursuline Convent."

Although on her marriage with M. Roland she had confessed that she esteemed more than she loved him, yet never was wife more devoted to husband than she ; never was husband happier in a wife than he. In her memoirs she thus bears testimony to the mutual confidence and sympathy subsisting between them :

"During twelve years I shared in my

husband's intellectual labors, as I did in his repasts ; because one was as natural to me as the other. As we had ever a perfect intercommunity of knowledge and opinions, he talked to me in private of political measures with entire confidence. If he wrote treatises on the arts, I did the same, though the subject was tedious to me. If he wished to write an essay for some Academy, we sat down to write in concert, that we might afterward compare our productions, choose the best, or compress them into one. I never interfered with his administration, but if a circular, letter, or important State paper were wanted, we talked the matter over with our usual freedom, and, impressed with his ideas and teeming with my own, I sometimes took up the pen, which I had more leisure to conduct than he had. Without me, Roland would have been quite as good a Minister, for his knowledge, his activity, and his integrity were all his own ; but I infused into his writings that mixture of spirit and gentleness, of authoritative reason

and seducing sentiment, which is only found in the language of a woman who has a clear head and a feeling heart."

At the time of Roland's second ministry, the tide of anarchical revolution had already begun to overflow unhappy France. The rotten barriers of an effete monarchy gave way before the surging waves of that scething sea of infuriated men and women. Those who sprang to guide the helm of the Ship of State in this tempest were one after another washed overboard, and perished. In spite of their upright honesty, their purity of intention, their conscientious earnestness, it was impossible for the Rolands to escape long the fury of the storm.

Filled with horror at the shocking massacres of September, Roland wrote an address of remonstrance to the Assembly on that occasion, which gave great offense to the Robespierrean party, that was already in power. Danton, Robespierre, and Marat were at this time the bitter enemies of the Rolands. Danton especially circulated

against them all kinds of rumors calculated to madden and inflame the populace against them. Recognizing "the power behind the throne," it was Madame Roland against whom these slanders were chiefly directed. It was Madame Roland who, on the 7th of December, 1792, was summoned before the bar of the Convention to answer those charges. She plead her own cause, standing erect before that tribunal of fierce-eyed men, a bright, regal-browed, beautiful woman, strong and brave in the face of their scowls, conscious of having pursued the right through all. She answered quietly, firmly, eloquently, undauntedly, all their questions, and they were obliged to dismiss her, with a secret sense of shamefacedness at their own discomfiture, but none the less determined to accomplish the ruin of her and hers.

Recognizing how vain were all efforts to stem the tide of terror and anarchy (then deluging the country with blood), and disliking to have their name associated with

those who really held the reins of power, Roland resigned in January, 1793. That resignation could not now save them. In May, Roland was arrested, and held a prisoner in his own house. His wife arose from a bed of sickness to demand his release at the bar of the Convention; waited vainly all day to get a hearing, and came home at night nearly discouraged, to be rejoiced by the tidings that he had made his escape. Her earnest wishes kept him in concealment after that against his own desire.

Knowing her danger, friends begged her to escape in disguise while there was yet time to save herself. But against this her Spartan soul revolted. "I am ashamed," she said, "of the part you would have me play. I will neither disguise myself nor leave the house. If they wish to assassinate me, it shall be in my own home. This example is due from me, and I will afford it." She was threatened in order to make her divulge the secret of her husband's hid-

ing-place. Her only reply to their threats was, "I scorn to tell a falsehood. I know his plans, but I neither ought nor choose to tell them."

When in June, 1793, she was, as she expected to be, arrested, her domestics clung weeping around her. "These people love you," observed one of the officers sent to convey her to prison. She turned her proud, calm face toward him: "I never had those about me who did not," was her reply. The maddened, ignorant mob hooted, and shouted derisively around the carriage in which she was seated. "Shall we close the blinds of the carriage?" asked one of the officials, politely wishing to spare her feelings.

"No, gentlemen," she said calmly; "I do not fear the eyes of the populace. Innocence should never assume the guise of crime."

"Madame," said the officer, "you have more strength of mind than many men; you wait patiently for justice."

“Justice!” she exclaimed; “were justice done I should not be here. But if I am destined for the scaffold, I shall walk to it with the same firmness and tranquillity with which I now go to prison. I never feared anything but guilt.”

During the five months of imprisonment that followed her arrest, although surrounded by all the horrors of the Revolution, and though tortured by her anxiety in regard to her husband and child, she kept up before her fellow-prisoners a dignified, courageous deportment, cheering and comforting the faint-hearted and despairing with rare serenity and heroic calmness.

When alone, however, the feelings of the wife and mother triumphed at times over her philosophical endurance, and she wept with passionate, womanly vehemence. But of these yieldings to despondency her fellow-sufferers were allowed to see no trace, and beheld in her only the Spartan firmness of a soul at peace with itself.

Knowing how uncertain, or, rather, how

certain, her fate was, she employed much of her time in writing her memoirs, every page of which had to be concealed and carried to a place of safety by those friends who gained admittance to her prison. She wrote at first historic memoirs of all the principal actors in the Revolution; but the friend to whose care the manuscript had been confided, fearing its discovery, felt obliged to destroy it.

Toward the close of her imprisonment a form of trial and conviction was gone through with, but she knew well that she was sentenced to the guillotine, and so built no false hopes on that trial. Once she thought of writing to Robespierre, who owed to her a debt of gratitude for having been the means of saving his life in 1791 while Roland was in power; but on consideration she tore the letter she had written to him into pieces, disdaining even in this her great need to ask her life from him. Once, too, she entertained the thought of suicide, rather than endure a public execu-

tion; but feeling that this would be construed into an act of cowardice, she threw the opium procured for that purpose away.

During their imprisonment the prisoners were allowed to see and converse with each other, and she exerted herself at such times to the utmost to cheer and encourage her fellow-prisoners. She showed them a face bright and buoyant with a brave spirit, if not with hope. Young men and old, looking upon that face in its defiance of the power of death, listening to the brave words of that unflinching soul, grew strong to meet the martyrdom they had dared for dear Liberty's sake, and learned to smile gravely even under the grim shadow of the guillotine, feeling that, after all, their lives had not been lived in vain, when they were to give them up in sacrifice to freedom in such glorious companionship.

Riouffe, one of her fellow-prisoners, who subsequently escaped, says of her: "Something more than is usually found in the looks of women painted itself in those large

dark eyes of hers, full of expression and sweetness. She spoke to me often at the grate, with the freedom and courage of a great man. Such republican language in the mouth of a beautiful French woman preparing for the scaffold was a miracle of the Revolution for which we were not prepared. We listened to her in admiration and astonishment."

Her brave soul having proved itself equal to every other emergency was now to prove itself equal to the last great emergency—Death! She rose up equal to the level of that occasion, and in the language of Robert Browning seemed to say:

"I would hate that death bandaged my eyes, and forbore  
And bade me creep past.  
No! let me taste the whole of it, fare like my peers,  
The heroes of old!  
Bear the brunt, in a minute pay glad, life's arrears  
Of pain, darkness, and cold."

The 8th of November, 1793, was the day set apart for her martyrdom. She was calm, radiant, pitying, to the last. The car of

the condemned might have been that of a conquering queen as it moved slowly amid the jeering crowd toward the place of execution, bearing that erect white-robed figure whose tender eyes were bent pityingly on the maddened faces around her, her own bearing a look of high steadfast resolve. Carlyle describes her on her way to execution as, "A noble white vision, with its high queenly face, its soft proud eyes, long black hair flowing down to her girdle, and as brave a heart as ever beat in woman's bosom. Like a white Grecian statue, serenely complete she shines in that black wreck of things. Graceful to the eye, more so to the mind; genuine, the creature of sincerity and nature in an age of artificiality, pollution, and cant; there, in her still completeness, she, if thou knew it, is the noblest of all French women."

There was a pause—a stir, at the foot of the guillotine. Would she faint, this brave woman, at the horrors prepared for her—at the headsman's basket and sharp

hungry machine of death? She bent reverently to the statue of Liberty which with strange mockery was set up near the guillotine; uttered her world-famed apostrophe to it, "O Liberty! what crimes are committed in thy name!" spoke a few cheering words to the old man, La Marche, who shared her fate; begged the executioner to spare those aged eyes the horror of witnessing her death; asked, as her face grew eloquent with the sublime thoughts which this supreme hour of her life evoked, for pen and paper to which to commit them—asked only to be brutally refused. With unfaltering step, unblanched face, and serene eyes, she stepped upon the scaffold, and stepped a moment later into the unknowable, and, through that cruel death, into at least an earthly immortality. So perished, at the age of thirty-nine, one of the purest, if not the purest character evoked by the French Revolution. Much as I revere the character of the man Jesus, I doubt whether his death was more sublime than was hers.

I doubt also whether any belief in his atoning virtues could have made this woman's death more heroic than did her faith in "all that was great, and good, and immortal," within herself, and her belief of the truths she advocated, and for which she died.

As soon as M. Roland heard of her execution, filled with anguish and despair he emerged from his concealment at Rouen, and started on the road to Paris, probably with some vague thought of avenging her death; but, unable to endure his poignant grief, killed himself with his sword, by the wayside, leaving a note by which to identify his body, in which he said, "Indignation, not fear, induced me to quit my retreat. When I heard of the fate of my wife, I no longer wished to live in a world so polluted with crime!" His corpse was found under a tree by the roadside.

Madame Roland had declared that her husband would never consent to survive her execution, and the event justified her prophetic fear. Beautiful faith of a wife in a

husband's love! and noble testimony of the husband to the merit of his wife! A writer in the *London Critical Review* says, in regard to her, "The objections to her character are those common to her with most of the French writers and politicians of that period. They are philosophers without wisdom, and moralists without religion." "Her life," say Philip and Grace Wharton, "was morally faultless; but she was a Deist." Even the liberal-hearted Lydia Maria Child remarks, "I might enlarge upon other points of her character, which qualify my respect for Madame Roland; but the times in which she lived were corrupt, and religion cast away as an idle toy, fit only for the superannuated."

All of which means only that the one blemish to be found in her by her biographers was that which soon shall be accounted the highest evidence of her clear insight—that she had dared to think for herself in religious as in other matters, and being a brave as well as conscientious wo-

man, had boldly avowed herself a Deist, and a disbeliever in the "divine right" of priests as well as of kings. Having lived a pure, true life, she died trusting to her own merits rather than to those of any mediator. Her Deism, it appears, did not corrupt her morals, or make her any less lovingly brave; did not make her a less dutiful daughter, less faithful wife, less loving mother, less warm-hearted friend; did not make her even fear death. She was a clear thinker, a wise pilot at the helm of State, a daring patriot, an earnest, courageous soul. She was a true woman, who acted out in freedom, and untrammelled, the highest attributes of the feminine nature.

"A perfect woman, nobly planned  
To warn, to comfort, and command."

Mrs. Barbauld speaks in the following enthusiastic terms of Madame Roland's "Appeal to Impartial Posterity":

"What talents! What energy of character! What powers of description! But

have you seen the second part, which has not been printed here, and which contains memoirs of her life from the earliest period to the death of her mother, when she was one-and-twenty? It is surely the most singular book that has appeared since the 'Confessions of Rousseau,' a book that none but a French woman *could* write, and wonderfully entertaining. I began it with a certain fear upon my mind: What is this woman going to tell me? Will it be anything but what will lessen my esteem for her? If, however, we were to judge of the female and male mind by contrasting these confessions with those, the advantage of purity will be greatly on the side of our sex."

"Madame Roland," says Margaret Fuller, "is the fairest specimen we yet have of her class; as clear to discern her aim, as valiant to pursue it, as Spenser's Britomarte; austere set apart from all that did not belong to her, whether as woman or as mind. She is an antetype of a class to

which the coming time will afford a field—the Spartan matron, brought by the culture of the age of books to intellectual consciousness and expansion. Self-sufficingness, strength, and clear-sightedness were in her combined with a power of deep and calm affection.”

In 1795 the *Memoirs of Madame Roland* were published in two volumes, and sold for the benefit of her young daughter Eudora, by the friend who had undertaken the care of the child.

In 1800 appeared an edition of her works in three volumes, containing all her writings, consisting of “An Appeal to Impartial Posterity,” “Works of Leisure Hours, and Various Reflections,” “A Journey to Sans Souci, and Travels in Switzerland.”

These writings are marked by fervid grace and discriminating thought, warmed by enthusiasm and vivacious earnestness. Her life required of her heroic action, which filled up to completeness the measure of its possibilities; yet she could not, even had it

been otherwise, have passed away from us without leaving to posterity some record of the greatness of her nature, the nobleness of her thought. Her more mature writings would, I am convinced, have evidenced to the world what manner of woman she was.

MARY WOLLSTONECRAFT GODWIN.



MARY WOLLSTONECRAFT  
GODWIN.

**R**ARELY has so pure, so true, so brave-hearted a woman been known as was the subject of the present sketch. A woman, however, whose m<sup>e</sup>mory has been blackened and calumniated, whose name has been spoken in contempt, whose virtues have been too frequently overlooked or forgotten, and whose mistakes have been held up to the world's scorn as positive vices. Some who remember only her avowed Deism, her socialistic theories, her open disregard and contempt for the marriage ceremony, her bold handling of subjects foreign to the accepted idea of womanly delicacy, her scornful ridicule of all those clinging, dependent graces which are held to endear

her sex to the heart of man, may dissent from my estimate of her worth; but for myself I cannot see my way out of giving her the high place she merits, when I remember her earnestness, her perseverance, her unconquerable courage, her faith in humanity, her noble charity and self-forgetfulness, her fidelity in friendship, her generous, forgiving spirit, and her hearty detestation of everything false or trivial.

Hers was a hard life from its beginning. Her father, an Englishman, by the name of Edward John Wollstonecraft, was obstinate, unthrifty, unreasonable, and domineering. Her Irish mother was weak, with no true idea of parental government, and slavishly fearful of her husband's bad temper. It was the domestic tyranny of her father which first disgusted Mary's girlish but thoughtful mind with the marriage laws—that gave to such a man absolute, autocratic control over his family—and which turned her attention at a very early age to those subjects the consideration of which made her

the daring iconoclast she afterward became. The habits of the family were so migratory that Mary's birthplace could not in after years positively be known, but it was thought to be Epping Forest. She was born April 27, 1759. Although a girl of rare abilities and studious tastes, she had no other opportunities of procuring an education but those afforded by the commonest day schools, until at the age of sixteen she became acquainted with Rev. Mr. Clare, an eccentric old clergyman, who became deeply interested in the beautiful, talented, but untaught and undisciplined young girl. He not only gave her free access to his full and rare library, but helped her by his advice and assistance to the course of study that would be most profitable to her. It was at his house she first formed that acquaintance, which ripened into a life-long friendship, with Frances Blood, a young girl two years her senior in age, and at that time her superior in educational advantages and accomplishments. This friendship, to-

gether with that of Mr. Clare, gave a new impulse to the aims and pursuits of her life, and she began from that time to bend every energy in efforts to obtain as thorough an education as her means, with the most rigid economy, would admit of, and from thenceforth her mind took a higher, wider, intellectual range.

In order to obtain money to carry out her plans, she went to live, as companion and waiting-maid, with an eccentric old lady, a Mrs. Dawson, with whom she remained until recalled home by the death of her mother, in 1780. Her father soon after marrying again, and her younger sister Eliza having married a Mr. Bishop, who treated her so brutally that she was forced to leave him, Mary, in order to obtain the means of livelihood for both, started a day school at Newington Green, in which enterprise she was assisted by her friend Fannie Blood, who went into partnership with her, and also occasionally by her sisters Eliza and Everina.

It was while teaching at Newington Green that she became acquainted with the Rev. Dr. Richard Price, a man of Liberal ideas, an enthusiastic revolutionist, whose staunch republicanism first gave form and direction to Mary's hitherto undefined thoughts on civil and religious liberty. In his society she first found vent for her enthusiastic admiration of a republican form of government and all free institutions.

Early in 1785, her friend Frances Blood married, and went to reside with her husband in Lisbon, Portugal, leaving Mary in full charge of their school, assisted by her two sisters. In December of that same year Frances died, soon after giving birth to a child.

Before that event occurred, Mary was sent for to cheer the last hours of her dearly loved friend; a summons which she at once obeyed, leaving the school temporarily in charge of her two younger sisters, whom she was educating for teachers. She reached Lisbon in time to soothe and so-

lace by her presence her dying friend, and to close in death the eyes that for so many years had looked only lovingly into her own. Fannie's death was the cause of again arousing Mary's hot indignation against religious intolerance, and of strengthening her conviction that efforts should be made to break these shackles from the human mind: for the authorities at Lisbon refused to allow her friend to be buried in consecrated ground, as she was a Protestant in religion; and Mary's first open defiance of the "powers that be" was in assisting to "steal her friend a grave."

In December she returned to England, to find her school broken up and disorganized by the mismanagement of those whom she had left in charge; and, disheartened by the death of her colaborer, she determined not to reorganize it, but for a season to try some other method of gaining a livelihood. She had at this time little money, and many claimants upon her purse and heart, for her sisters were entirely de-

pendent on her bounty; and her generous nature was just at this time strongly appealed to by the poverty and distress of Mr. and Mrs. Blood, the parents of her friend, who were in England, and very anxious to return to their own home in Ireland, but without the necessary pecuniary means to do so. Eager to repay to the parents the kindness she had received from their daughter, Mary was spurred on to write a pamphlet of 160 pages, entitled "Thoughts on the Education of Daughters," for which she received ten guineas from Mr. Johnson, a London publisher. This money; the first proceeds of her literary talents, she gave to Mr. and Mrs. Blood, to take them to Dublin. Dearer to her than the money, however, were the words of praise and encouragement which Mr. Johnson saw fit to bestow upon her talents in giving it. He urged her to devote her time to literary pursuits, but she had scarcely confidence enough in her own ability to do so; and having accepted the

situation of governess in the family of Lord Kingborough, she remained there a year, at the end of which time she yielded to Mr. Johnson's repeated solicitation, and began to devote herself to a literary career.

During the three years which followed, she wrote almost exclusively for Johnson; oftener, however, translating, condensing, and compiling from other sources than composing original articles; and thus, though the force and strength of her own peculiar genius was kept in abeyance, she was still the gainer in a facility of language, depth of thought, and culture of expression, which afterward gave to her original writings that graceful force and clearness for which they are noticeable. During those three years, however, she wrote her first story, "Mary—A Fiction," which was intended rather as a tender tribute to the memory of her friend Frances Blood than as a studied attempt at romance-writing. She, also, at this time, wrote frequent articles for the *Analytical Review*. Her translations from

the French, German, and Italian show the variety and breadth of her self-acquired education.

It was during these first years of authorship that Mary's father became involved in such pecuniary difficulties that she felt herself under obligation to assist and care for the younger members of her family, and in order to do so she found it necessary to practice the most rigid economy. Her two sisters, whom she had had educated at her own expense, the one in London, the other at Paris, were procured, through her endeavors, situations as governesses. Her brother Edward was a lawyer in London; Charles, a farmer in America; and James, an officer in the British navy. It was Mary who procured the land-grant for Charles, and obtained the commission for James. Yet they appear to have seemed ungrateful for the favors she did for them, if we may judge from a few grateful sentences in letters to her friend and publisher, Mr. Johnson—as these, for instance: “I never had a father

or a brother ; you have been both to me.”  
“When I involuntarily lament that I have not a father or a brother, I thankfully recollect that I have received unexpected kindness from you and a few others.”

Illustrative of her generous largeness of heart, it is told of her that, in spite of all these family claims upon her time, purse, and affections, she still found means to take under her charge and protection a little girl, whose lonely orphanhood was all the claim she needed to win the motherly kindness of this philanthropic woman.

Can we wonder that, accomplishing so much with her limited means, she held in pitying contempt, and stigmatized as “pampered dolls,” those women, of whom there are so many, who, with larger opportunities than herself, fail in their duty as women and responsible individuals to make proper use of their time, wealth, and talents—merely using all three as means to make themselves attractive to the eyes of sensual men ?

When, in 1790, Edmund Burke, previ-

ously looked upon as the staunch friend and advocate of human freedom, surprised and grieved his friends by his "Reflections on the French Revolution," Mary Wollstonecraft—who had already defiantly exercised the rights denied her sex, by interesting herself in the politics and government of her country—grew hot with indignation at what she conceived to be his perfidy to his previously enunciated principles, and was among the first to reply to him in a pamphlet, of which a writer in *Harper's Magazine* speaks thus: "The friends of liberty—Burke's old admirers—were wofully disappointed by what seemed to them his apostasy from his and their old political faith. The advocates of despotism, of prerogative, of the divine right of kings, were delighted. Intense excitement universally prevailed. While this excitement was at its height the public mind was startled by an answer coming from an unexpected quarter, written with great vigor and spirit, entitled 'A Vindication of the Rights of Man,' and

bearing on its title-page the name of Mary Wollstonecraft. Its violence of tone and temper can now scarcely be praised even by the warmest advocates of its doctrines. But it was heartily welcomed and commended at the time by the lovers of liberty in England and on the Continent. It introduced Mary Wollstonecraft to fame, and placed her among the celebrities of that exciting period ; nor was the impression thus produced very much weakened by the subsequent and more elaborate answers of Paine and Macintosh to Mr. Burke's 'Reflections.' One half of it was written and printed when its author appeared at Mr. Johnson's, one evening, and announced that her courage was failing ; that she could not write any more at present ; and described with comical ingenuousness her helpless indolence and obstinate disinclination to go on with the work. Her publisher answered her with quiet kindness, begged her to put no constraint on her inclinations, and to give herself no uneasiness about the sheets

already printed, which he would cheerfully throw aside if it would contribute to her happiness. It was now her turn to be astonished. She sprang to her feet with an earnest 'No, thank you, Mr. Johnson; I shall go home and finish it at once.' And she did."

The writer from whom we quote the above goes on to say: "Her first meeting with Mr. Godwin, her future husband, occurred soon after this startling publication. They met at a dinner party, and were mutually displeased. Godwin had read her book, and, although he was an earnest republican, his quiet temper was offended by the occasional harshness and ruggedness of character exhibited by her 'Vindication.' She, in turn, was annoyed by his philosophical calmness and gentle equanimity, and so they separated, little dreaming that hereafter they would become husband and wife."

It is very probable that it was the publication of that work, and the consequent comments on the audacity of a *woman*

undertaking to write on political affairs, which turned her attention more closely to the subject of "*Woman's rights.*" She began to question the reasons given to account for woman's subordinate position; began to endeavor to ascertain her true capabilities, responsibilities and needs, and to ask to what extent her subordination retarded true progress even in the sex whose will kept her in that subjection. The result of these inquiries and investigations was the publication in 1792 of her "*Vindication of the Rights of Woman,*" a passionate defense of the true dignity, and an eloquent plea for the fitter education, of woman; a work coming directly from her heart, and sanctioned by the deliberate reasoning of her brain.

However much educational prejudice may warp candid criticism of this work, it must still be confessed that it is an eloquent and impassioned effort. Its aim is revealed in a sentence occurring in its dedication to M. Talleyrand, in which she says, "Contending for the rights of woman, my main

argument is built upon this simple principle, that if she be not prepared by education to become the companion of man, she will stop the progress of knowledge; for truth must be common to all, or it will be inefficacious with respect to its influence on general practice. If children are to be educated to understand the true principle of patriotism, their mother must be a patriot; and the love of mankind, from which an orderly train of virtues spring, can only be produced by considering the moral and civil interests of mankind; but the education and situation of woman at present shuts her out from such investigations."

In this work, which she wrote in the short space of six weeks, she is almost masculinely severe and contemptuous in her estimate of her own sex, attacking with sarcasm and pitying scorn its attempts to hold men's hearts in bondage by sensual attraction, rather than by superior excellence of morals or high intellectual attainments. But more just than man, she blames man

himself for woman's incapacity. Her hearty detestation of affectation and mock modesty is apparent in the freedom and good sense with which she approaches and deals with topics which in those days were considered too indelicate for women to write or converse about, albeit they were topics which most concerned women. To Mary Wollstonecraft's honor be it recorded, that, although at the time of its publication, and for long years afterward, this book met with abuse and misrepresentation — with sneers and ridicule from its male critics, and little shrieks of affected delicacy from her own sex, it yet succeeded in inaugurating the work of reform in female education. Even while men sneered, they could not well help perceiving the force and truth of her arguments, and so at last, though rather shamefacedly, began to make movements themselves in the right direction; and though women blushed and simpered if her book was publicly mentioned, they yet were curious enough about it to read its pages by

stealth, and, feeling self-condemned by her accusations, began little by little to act on her advice, provided they could do so without observation or criticism. And to-day there is nothing in its pages calculated to startle or surprise the general reader, for, as the magazine writer from whom I have before quoted remarks, "It contains little upon the subject of woman's rights which has not *now* become familiar to every mind."

Toward the close of 1792, having, on her father's account, become involved in pecuniary difficulties, she determined to leave London for Paris. In that city, amid the thrilling scenes of the Revolution then at its height, her republican opinions and socialistic theories received new impetus. Mary was earnest and enthusiastic. What others were content to theorize and philosophise over, she was anxious to test by practical experience. She did not know, or else overlooked the fact, that it needs a new world, and a new race of human beings, to put

visionary theories into immediate practical effect, however beneficent and beautiful they may appear in the ideal. More understood this when he made for his Utopians a Utopia fitted expressly for their needs. Theories of government in order to be of immediate use must be adapted to the intellect and needs of living people; the customs and prejudices of centuries cannot be broken on the wheel of a new ideal, however perfect the ideal may appear to be. In such cases the theory itself may be broken into hopeless impracticability, but the people will remain the same.

Mary's reputation as an authoress and writer of revolutionary books drew around her in Paris many persons of congenial tastes and kindred views. Among these was Gilbert Imlay, an American gentleman, who soon began to show evidence of a warmer attachment than mere friendship for this daring, enthusiastic, liberty-loving woman. The attachment soon grew to be mutual, and, with all the passionate ardor of her

nature, Mary gave herself up to this happy dream of a perfect and congenial union. Her ideal of a true and holy marriage was that where congeniality of tastes and pursuits, oneness of thought, and true, tender love should hold the parties together by stronger and more indissoluble bonds than merely legal rites could bestow. She forgot, or was unaware of, the thousand and one circumstances which arise to make men forget their most sacred oaths, their most solemn vows; she was not herself *blase* enough to know anything of the dead-sea fruit of satiety which is sure to follow possession of the thing desired, in a selfish and ardent nature; so she cast aside as useless mummary those legal ceremonies which in our present state of society are woman's surest protection and man's only claim; and trusting entirely, undoubtingly, to a man's love and loyalty, became the wife of Gilbert Imlay in everything save the sanction of the law.

This step proved a bitter, well-nigh a

fatal, mistake on her part. For a year or two, while the sweet newness of his attachment had not lost its charm for his fickle passions, her Utopian dream seemed a reality to her. One can fancy the fine pure-hearted scorn with which, in the meantime, she must have looked upon those mismated, unloving souls, held together by the law's firm undiscriminating bond, while in her union love was the only high-priest and lawgiver, and she had demonstrated to an unbelieving world the realization of a theory. She would have laughed to scorn any croaker who prophesied an estrangement between herself and the father of her child — *their* child! Could even heaven prevail against a union cemented by so strong and true a love?

But Imlay soon tired of what to him was only a bit of romance, and his cloyed passions demanded a change of loves. Early in 1795, he made some excuse to leave her in Paris, while he went to London, hoping thus to get easily rid of her; but, unsuspi-

scious of his designs, she followed him in May, accompanied by her child and its nurse. He threw off all disguise then, and let her see plainly that he no longer cared for her. Her ardent, impetuous, thoughtful soul sank under this undreamed-of blow, and in the depths of her despair she twice attempted suicide, once succeeding so far in her design as to throw herself into the Thames river, from whence she was rescued in a state of insensibility. Her violence of despair so frightened Imlay that he pretended a reconciliation with her, protesting his repentance, and renewing his old vows of undying love and constancy. But determined at heart on a separation, he soon found an excuse to send her as his agent on some business affairs to Sweden and Norway. She was accompanied only by her little girl Frances and the child's nurse. It was during this absence that she wrote those "Letters from Sweden, Norway, and Denmark," of which her husband, William Godwin, remarks: "No other book of travel so irresistibly

scizes on the heart. It speaks of her sorrows in a way that fills us with melancholy, and dissolves us in tenderness, at the same time that her genius commands admiration, and we are constrained to love the writer"; and Mrs. Siddons, the celebrated actress, says of them, "No one could read them with more reciprocity of feeling, or be more deeply impressed than I am with admiration of the writer's extraordinary powers." The greater number of these letters are addressed to Imlay, and we cannot but wonder of what sort of stuff the man's heart was made, that he could resist these eloquent appeals to all that was best of him, or refrain from loving so true and tender a soul.

But that he did not love her, and that his new-made protestations were false, is proven from the fact that on her return in October to England, after her four months' absence, she found that Imlay had gone back to America with a newer love.

Perhaps she had already guessed that

this might be the ease before her return ; perhaps her heart had received too severe a shock at her first discovery of his perfidy to again trust him implicitly ; at any rate, she did not again yield to her former frenzy of passionate grief, but, seemingly determined to no longer grieve over the loss of one who had proved himself so utterly unworthy of her respect or affection, devoted herself with renewed interest to her literary labors, and to the care and education of her little girl.

It was soon after her return from Norway that she was again thrown into the society of William Godwin, who was already a writer of considerable repute. He is described by Carlyle as "one of the marked men everywhere — grave, strong, and with some imagination, too, as 'Caleb Williams' proves. He was, too, a fine-looking man, with a fair fine forehead."

The interest he felt in Mary's misfortunes, the admiration excited in him by her genius, and the radical opinions which he

held in common with her, drew him toward her, and gradually led the way to a deeper, tenderer attachment, which was soon reciprocal. Time and sorrow had softened the *brusque*, impetuous manner, and toned down the highly enthusiastic nature to more womanly gentleness; and although nearly thirty-eight years of age, she yet retained much of that youthful beauty which the painter Opie immortalized by his brush, and of which one who has seen it writes thus:

“Ingenuous sweetness is the prevailing expression. None of her works, save her ‘Letters from Norway,’ would lead us to expect such a style of beauty. We should look rather for a strongly marked and masculine face.”

Robert Southey writes of her to J. Cottle, under date of March, 1797: “Of all the lions or *litcrati* I have seen here (in London), Mary Imlay’s countenance is the best—infinitely the best. The only fault in it is an expression somewhat similar to what the prints of Horne Tooke display—an expres-

sion indicating superiority ; not haughtiness, not sarcasm in Mary Imlay, but still it is unpleasant. Her eyes are light brown, and although the lid of one of them is affected by a little paralysis, they are the most meaning I ever saw."

That Godwin and Mary, in spite of the latter's harsh experience, should dare to live as man and wife for some time without the sanction of the law, only marrying when fearful of the legal rights of their unborn babe, shows that they still held to the truth of their Utopian theories ; but for the sake of their child, they conceded so much to custom as to be legally married, but very privately, on the 29th of March, 1797, in old St. Pancras Church, London.

Their short marital experience was, apparently, one of unclouded happiness. Their halcyon days, though coming late, were none the less delightful, though it may be doubted, considering the cold, self-poised nature of Godwin, whether a longer life

with him would not have brought to the ardent heart of Mary a withering chill.

On the 30th of August, 1797, their only child, Mary Wollstonecraft Godwin, was born, and on the 10th of September following the mother died, leaving to the care of Godwin this child (who afterward became the wife of Shelley) and the child of Imlay, who was known as Fanny Godwin, then about three or four years old. This daughter lived with Godwin and his second wife until she was twenty-two, when, without any known cause, she committed suicide, by taking laudanum, while on her way to visit her aunts, the Wollstonecraft sisters.

Godwin bore his wife's death with his usual stoical equanimity, but busied himself with her works and memoirs, to the exclusion of all other literary labor, in the year following her death. "This light was lent me for a very little while," he says in the memoir prefixed to her works, "and it is now extinguished forever." But Mr. Roscoe,

reading those memoirs soon after their publication, wrote thus :

“Hard was thy fate in all the scenes of life,  
As Daughter, Sister, Mother, Friend, and Wife,  
But harder still thy fate in death we own,  
Thus mourned by Godwin, with a heart of stone.”

Shelley speaks of her, in a poem addressed to her daughter, as follows :

“Of glorious parents, thou aspiring child,  
I wonder not, for one then left the earth  
Whose life was like a setting planet mild,  
Which clothed thee in the radiance undefiled  
Of her departing glory. Still her fame  
Shines on thee, through these tempests dark and wild.”

Of her personal character her husband, who should know her best, speaks in the highest terms: “Never did there exist a woman,” he says of her, “who might with less fear expose her actions, and call upon the universe to judge them.” “Lovely in her person, she was, in the best and most engaging sense, feminine in her manners.” “The strength of Mary’s mind lay in her intuition. In a robust and unwavering judg-

ment of this sort, there is a kind of witchcraft. When it decides justly, it produces a responsive vibration in every ingenuous mind. In this sense my oscillation and skepticism were often fixed by her boldness."

"About thirty years ago," writes M. D. Conway, in 'South Coast Saunterings in England,' "the most eloquent London preacher of that day, W. J. Fox, said in an address to the working class: 'In that old St. Pancras, with its ancient burial ground, at a remote corner, those who are disposed for such a pilgrimage may find an unobtrusive, unostentatious tomb, built some forty years ago by William Godwin for Mary Wollstonecraft, and where some few years ago they who had been united in life became blended in the grave. When people can rightly estimate their benefactors; when nobility is judged by intellect and character, and not by title or station; when woman's wrongs are righted, and man's rights are recognized; when achieved freedom throws

its light and luster back on those who toiled through the transition time, and were as stars that rose and set again before the coming day—then will crowds frequent that now solitary corner; laurels will be planted around that humble monument, and sculptured marble will tell what public gratitude awards to those who lived, and wrote, and spent the best energies of their lives in preparing the way for man's redemption from social and political bondage.' In the year 1851, the widening of a street in St. Pancras disturbed many graves, and the present Lady Shelley removed the bodies of William and Mary Godwin to a churchyard in Bournemouth. The 'sculptured marble' which fulfils Mr. Fox's prophecy is a simple flat slab, but there are vistas of history opening from its brief records: 'William Godwin, author of "Political Justice," born March 3, 1756; died April 7, 1836.' 'Mary Wollstonecraft Godwin, author of "A Vindication of the Rights of Woman;" born April, 1759, died September 10, 1797.' The grave

is fringed with ever-fresh roses, which seem to say :

‘Only the actions of the just  
Smell sweet, and blossom in the dust.’”

Mary’s religious opinions, like many other things in regard to her, have been misrepresented. She has been called a Materialist, and Atheist ; she was neither of these, though a Freethinker. She was a Deist : a devout and reverential believer in the existence of an all-wise and all-loving God. In proof of this, I quote a few sentences from her “Rights of Woman”:

“Gracious Creator of the whole human race ! hast thou created such a being as woman, who can trace thy wisdom in thy works, and feel that thou alone art by thy nature exalted above her—for no better purpose ? Can she believe that she was only made to submit to man, her equal, a being who, like her, was sent into this world to acquire virtue ? Can she consent to be occupied merely to please him, when her soul is capable of rising to thee ?” (Page 71.)

“I have reverentially lifted up my eyes and heart to Him who liveth forever and ever, and said, O my Father, hast thou by the very constitution of her nature forbid thy child to seek thee in the fair forms of truth! And can her soul be sullied by the knowledge that awfully calls her to thee!” (Page 132.)

“That awful intercourse, that sacred communion, which virtue establishes between man and his Maker, must give rise to the wish of being pure, as he is pure!” (Page 140.)

“Religion! pure source of comfort in this vale of tears! how has thy clear streams been muddied by the dabblers who have presumptuously endeavored to confine in one narrow channel the living waters that ever flow toward God—the sublime ocean of existence! What would life be without that peace which the love of God, when built on humanity, alone can impart!” (Page 175.)

“Why should I conceal my sentiments?

Considering the attributes of God, I believe that whatever punishment may follow will tend, like the anguish of disease, to show the malignity of vice, for the purpose of reformation. Positive punishment appears so contrary to the nature of God, discoverable in all his works, that I would sooner believe that the Deity paid no attention to the conduct of man than that he punished without the benevolent design of reforming. To suppose only that an all-wise and powerful Being, as good as he is great, should create a being, foreseeing that, after fifty or sixty years of feverish existence, it would be plunged into never-ending woe—is blasphemy. On such a supposition (I speak with reverence), he would be a consuming fire. We should wish, though vainly, to fly from his presence, when fear absorbed love, and darkness involved all his counsels. I know that many devout people boast of submitting to the will of God blindly, as to an arbitrary scepter or rod, on the same principle as the Indians worship the devil.

Like people in the common concerns of life, they do homage to power, and cringe under the foot that can crush them. Rational religion, on the contrary, is a submission to the will of a Being so perfectly wise that all he wills must be directed by the proper motive—must be reasonable. And if we thus respect God, can we give credit to the mysterious insinuations which insult his laws? Can we believe, though it should stare us in the face, that he would work a miracle to authorize confusion by sanctioning an error?" (Pages 200-201.)

These extracts show plainly enough her deeply reverential, yet broad, religious views. She found it impossible to accept the dogmas of the churches as true, and yet in unison with the idea of an all-pervading, all-wise, and all-creative Power, such as she believed God to be, she could not narrow *her* God within the church limits, so, rather than loose her hold of her high conception, she let go the churches and their narrow creeds, but held fast, with all the deep

ardor and breadth of her nature, to the unknowable, but all-sufficient God.

“Mary Wollstonecraft,” says Margaret Fuller, in her ‘Women of the Nineteenth Century,’ “was a woman whose existence better proved the need of some new interpretation of ‘Woman’s Rights’ than anything she wrote. Such beings as these, rich in genius, of most tender sympathies, capable of high virtue and a chastened harmony, ought not to find themselves by birth in a place so narrow that, in breaking bonds, they become outlaws.”

At the time of her death, Mary Wollstonecraft was only thirty-eight or thirty-nine years of age. She was thus in the very “golden prime” of womanhood, and the fullest vigor of intellect. We know not what high place in literature her strong intellect might have gained had a longer lease of life been accorded her. The few works she has bequeathed to us leave no doubt as to the genuineness of her powerful and eloquent genius. Of these works,

the following is a pretty complete list, although there may be others of which the trace has been lost:

“Thoughts on the Education of Daughters.” 1785.

“Mary—A Fiction.” 1787.

“Original Stories from Real Life.” 1788.

“Vindication of the Rights of Man.”  
1790.

“A Vindication of the Rights of Woman.” 1792.

“Historical and Moral View of the French Revolution.” 1794.

“A Comedy.” 1795.

“Letters from Sweden, Norway, and Denmark.” 1796.

Of her style, Mary Russel Mitford, herself a pure and good writer, speaks thus enthusiastically in a letter to Rev. William Harness, in 1854 :

“Another person to whom this work (A Life of Mrs. Opie) does huge injustice is Mary Wollstonecraft. Of course, I don't go along with her extreme opinions, although

they are but pale, not to say faded, pink, compared with the dashing scarlet of American and French audacity; but she was an exquisite writer. Madame De Stael stole much from her; but her French is miserable bombast compared to Mary Wollstonecraft's charming English; and George Sand—approaching her in a pure and perfect style—is wide as the poles apart from her in purity of feeling; for, married or not married, Mary Wollstonecraft wrote like a modest woman—was a modest woman."

MARY W. GODWIN SHELLEY.



## MARY W. GODWIN SHELLEY.

I AM a little doubtful as to the propriety of classing Mrs. Shelley among those Liberal-minded women who dared bravely to speak and write their inmost convictions of what they deemed the truth. The great shock of Shelley's sudden death had taught her, I think, that worldly wisdom and caution which seemed afterward to mark her course. Had Shelley lived, she would, doubtless, have been more outspoken, and would have earned for herself a more undying fame than she is now destined to. But being so intimately connected with three of the brightest names in the calendar of Free-thought, and herself never denying, even if she did not publicly uphold, the principles

of her father, mother, and husband, we cannot refuse her a place among these sketches of Freethinking women.

Mary Wollstonecraft Godwin was the only child of William Godwin, author of "Political Justice," and Mary Wollstonecraft, author of "A Vindication of the Rights of Woman." She was born August 30, 1797, and William Godwin, in gaining a daughter, lost a dearly beloved wife. She was brought up in the vicinity of Dundee, Scotland, where she passed most of her youth. Her father married again in 1801, and in 1804 went into business as a bookseller, an occupation which, I think, he followed during the rest of his life. Between the father and child existed a tender love, which partook of the nature of friendship as well as of parental and filial affection. She was to him the link that bound him to the memory of that brief year of happiness which he had enjoyed in the love and companionship of a spirit brave and intellectual as his own. To make that link more complete

and lasting, he had given the daughter the mother's name in full. He took the utmost pains with her education, and early instilled into her mind all those ideas of justice and liberty which are so prominent an element in his writings. It would have been a little singular if, brought up thus among books, with a prominent author for her father, who drew around him the choicest *litterateurs* of the day, and who discussed in her presence the topics congenial to them—it would, I repeat, have been strange if the little Mary had not caught a fancy for the same employment. “As a child,” she says of herself, “I scribbled, and my favorite pastime during the hours given me for recreation was to write stories.”

Godwin's iconoclastic spirit drew around him sympathetic souls—turbulent, discontented dreamers of all kinds, as well as the steadier and more fixed lights of literature and politics. Among the rest came the boyish, impetuous Shelley, whose rare genius had at that time scarcely developed itself

even into worthy promise of his after accomplishment. He was then burdened with debts, and struggling against the poverty and embarrassments which his apostasy from the faith of his fathers, and his youthful and inconsiderate marriage, had entailed upon him. In pursuing his acquaintance with the father, Shelley was frequently thrown into the society of the daughter, Mary Godwin, who was at this time a beautiful, enthusiastic girl of sixteen, to whom Shelley's story, in combination with Shelley's self, was sad and romantic enough to win her sympathy and her heart. Shelley greatly admired Godwin and his first wife, whose liberal sentiments found a warm response in his soul ; and the daughter of this gifted pair, herself young, witty, and lovely, could not fail to be to him an object of great interest. Mary Wollstonecraft and Godwin, filled with Utopian ardor, had believed that the day was already come when marriage should be no longer a matter of priests or parliaments, but of congeniality of tastes and sympathies.

They had dared to act out their opinion in the face of a shocked public, only marrying in time to give legality of birth to their child. These ideas in regard to marriage found a responsive echo in the mind of Shelley, whose legal marriage had proved so disastrous to all parties ; and so when the mutual unhappiness of himself and wife culminated in her despairing departure with her children to her father's house, it was not, perhaps, surprising that his admiration for Mary Godwin was allowed to deepen into love, openly expressed.

Great as is my admiration of the transcendant genius of Shelley, I must, as a woman, confess to feeling far greater sympathy in this affair for his young, and possibly foolish, wife, than I do for him. Hers was the more bitter repentance ; hers were the greater sufferings ; hers was the harder fate. I grow angry at this blot on Shelley's otherwise fair fame, but that fair fame does not dispose me to be more lenient toward this one mistake. My heart grows

sad over the sorrowful fate of that young and deserted wife, whose bitter agony found relief at last in self-destruction. I know it is customary with the apologists of Shelley to ascribe this act to a mania which had held possession of her from her girlhood; but that Shelley himself did not think so is shown by the depth of his feelings on hearing of the sad event; for it is said that after learning of her death he became temporarily insane, and did not recover his usual tone of spirits for a long time afterward. One could fancy almost a sort of poetical justice in the fact of Shelley's meeting *his* death a few years later as she did — by drowning.

But of the peculiar trials of her predecessor Mary Godwin knew—could know—nothing. Despite his unquestionably great genius, Shelley was yet but an undisciplined, romantic boy in years and in feeling. He deemed himself the greatest sufferer from this marriage; and listening only to the poet's impassioned recital of his own woes,

the chivalric causes which made him "marry in haste, to repent at leisure," the lack of sympathy shown by his wife toward all his high aims and pursuits, and his deep regret over that fatal step, combined with a hint of the glorifying love which came almost too late—who can blame Mary Godwin if she, a romantic girl of seventeen, who had been educated to believe in the superiority of true love and sympathy over any mere man-made laws, became willingly, and even without the consent of her philosophic father, the wife of Shelley, in all but legal recognition.

In 1814, Shelley, not yet separated from his first wife, meeting Mary at the grave of her mother, whither she often fled to escape the scoldings of her step-mother, declared his love for her. The scene, their peculiar circumstances, their daring faith in each other, their youth, their beauty, made for them a romance which was irresistible. On the 14th of July, Harriet, Shelley's wife, came to London, and Godwin called on her,

and endeavored to reconcile Shelley to her, not dreaming of the drama going on under his own roof. On the 28th of July, Mary Godwin, aided, abetted, and accompanied by her step-mother's daughter, Jane Claremont, ran away with Shelley. Mrs. Godwin pursued the party, but could not make them return. Godwin held little or no communication with them until after the death of Shelley's first wife, and their legal marriage. "The three," says K. Paul, in his biography of Godwin, "went to Paris, where they bought a donkey, and rode him in turn to Geneva, the others walking. He was bought for Mary, as the weakest of the party, but Shelley's feet were soon blistered, and he was glad to ride now and then, not without the jeers of the passers-by. Sleeping now in a cabaret, and now in a cottage, they at last finished the strange honeymoon, and the strangest sentimental journey ever undertaken since Adam and Eve."

On account of his differences with his

family connections, England had become too unpleasant for Shelley's comfort or happiness, and so he remained abroad after his elopement until the death of the first Mrs. Shelley, who drowned herself November 9, 1817, left them free to legalize their union. Shelley hastened home to England, to claim the two children of his first marriage, after the death of their mother. It was a bitter mortification and grief to Shelley that Mr. Westbrook, the children's maternal grandfather, refused him the custody of them; and on bringing the matter into court, the claims of the father were set aside on the grounds of his "Infidelity," and the children were sent to be educated in a clergyman's family, the more surely to save them from any hereditary taint of skepticism. Although in this matter we cannot but sympathize with the shock to Shelley's feelings, yet from Mr. Westbrook's point of view the act was not only justifiable, but meritorious; for how could he reconcile it to *his* conscience to allow the Infidel

and his new Infidel wife to have the care of his daughter's little ones, especially when it had been proved to his satisfaction, at least, that his daughter found it impossible to live with him? And, besides, he could not but hold Shelley in a manner responsible for that daughter's death.

The death of Shelley's grandfather, the old baronet, in 1815, had placed at his disposal a yearly allowance, which placed him in moderately good circumstances. In 1818, haunted by a fear that by some chicanery of the law he might also be deprived of the care of his boy William, the eldest son of his second wife, he left England with his wife and child, never to return.

In the nomadic life which for several years they led in Italy, existence grew very dear and sweet to both. Shelley was now writing constantly, and his rapidly extending fame drew around them a band of congenial spirits, among whom were Byron, Trelawny, Leigh Hunt, Keats, and Polidori. Lord Byron had met them in Switzerland in 1816,

and there formed that acquaintance with Shelley which resulted in a friendship that was terminated only by the great terminator of all things—Death.

Yet even now they were not allowed to think themselves forgotten of Sorrow, for at different times Death stilled the hearts of the two eldest of their little children, who had grown so dear to them: taking first William, and then Clara, only the youngest, named for his father, Percy, remaining to them.

Before their union, Shelley had recognized, and acknowledged, his wife's genius, and constantly afterward he urged her to write, and prove herself to the world a true child of her gifted parents; but she was too happy in his society, too busy with the care of her little ones, to obey his suggestions, or to accomplish much literary labor previous to his death. However, there came an evening, when Lord Byron was visiting them at their Italian villa, only Byron, Polidori, Shelley, and his wife being present, and

the talk chanced to run on ghosts, goblins, and wraiths. The subject had a weird fascination for those poetic, mystic natures, and it held them with its half-defined sense of the horrible until far into the night. As they at last rose to retire, Byron in one of his sudden impulses, said, "Let us each write a ghost story!" All eagerly agreed, and made a compact there and then to do so. No one was to see any part of the others' manuscript, till all were completed. Like most sudden compacts of the kind, it was only partly carried out.

The idea was to Mary a strangely fascinating one. She was young, scarcely nineteen, and had been brought up in Scotland, the land of "bogles," "brownies," and witchcraft; and despite the practical philosophic teachings of her father, she had imbibed a good share of the spirit of belief in the "uncanny." All night long the idea of her story grew in all its weird horror in her brain; and "Frankenstein," her most notable work, was the result. I think hers

was the only completed story that arose from Byron's proposal and that night's compact. Shelley was delighted with this specimen of his wife's gifts, and proud of his intuitive perception of her power. It was not, however, published for a year after its completion, but was the first she gave to the press. This work shows a mind wonderfully thoughtful and mature for one so young as Mrs. Shelley was at that time, and amid the strange, ghastly horror of the story, there gleam here and there traces of the daring skeptical philosophisings so prominent in the writings of her parents and her husband ; as, for instance, when she makes Frankenstein say :

“With how many things are we upon the brink of becoming acquainted, if cowardice or carelessness did not restrain our inquiries.”

And, again :

“For the first time, also, I felt what the duties of a Creator toward his creature were, and that I ought to render him

happy before I complained of his wickedness."

I think "Frankenstein" was the only work of importance, if not *the* only one, which Mrs. Shelley completed during the lifetime of her husband. Sorrow and poverty compelled her afterward to a vocation for which her predilections and education had fitted her, and in which she would have appeared to greater advantage had not her maternal doubts and fears fettered and restrained the freedom of her pen.

In the midst of her loving happiness, her pleasant friendships, her dreams of fame for herself, and, more than all else, for her beloved Shelley, there came that dreadful, that cruel blow, from which she never afterward quite recovered—the drowning of Shelley in the bay of Spezzia, by the upsetting of his yacht, on the 8th of July, 1822. To kiss him a light "good-by"—to let him go with smiling eyes, and unfearing, unprophetic heart to his death—to watch, in company with that other young wife, made

a widow by the same disaster, so calmly, so unfeeringly, the last gleam of the snowy sails of that treacherous craft, out on the blue waters of that cruel bay—and then so soon to wake to the knowledge that on that bright deceitful morning she had looked her last into the loving, living eyes of Shelley—that “wind, and wave, and oar” had combined to rob the poet-husband of life, and her of love—Oh, it seemed too cruelly awful to be true!

“I can never forget,” says Lord Byron, “the night when she rushed into my room at Pisa, with a face pale as marble, and terror impressed on her brow, demanding, with all the impetuosity of grief and alarm, where was her husband. Vain were all our efforts to calm her; a desperate sort of courage seemed to give her energy to confront the horrible truth that awaited her; it was the courage of despair. I have seen nothing in tragedy on the stage so powerful or so affecting as her appearance, and it often presents itself to my memory.”

The ashes of Shelley were buried in the Protestant burial-ground at Rome, near the grave of their eldest child. Those sacred ashes kept the mourning and uncomforted young widow a year longer alone in a strange land among strangers ; while her father and her home friends were urgent for her return to them. To be near *his* grave—the idolized husband whom she thenceforward never names but as “mine own Shelley”—she was willing to give up home and friends. But her love for that husband's son and namesake did that which no other affection could do—recalled her to England in 1823.

After the death of Shelley's grandfather, the first baronet of the name, his title and estate fell to an uncle of the poet, Sir Timothy Shelley. Mrs. Shelley's only living child, the little Percy, was, after Sir Timothy, the prospective heir ; and at the suggestion of his father's family, she returned with him to England, in order to give him the benefit of an English education. Sir Timothy was prejudiced against her on

account of those Liberal views which it was well known she indorsed, and he was anxious to have the future baronet brought up in strict Orthodoxy, and to that end did his best to separate the boy from his mother. With the memory of Shelley's bitter experience in being denied the custody of his children, on the grounds of his "Infidelity," and fearing a like fate for herself, it is not to be wondered at that the mother's love proved stronger than the thinker's spirit, and that to keep her child all her own she made concessions which nothing else would have wrung from her: and so for her boy's sake, her pen wrote no word which might offend that boy's relatives. Yet she did not deny her faith—the "belief of the unbeliever"—but merely kept passive. But Sir Timothy could not quite forgive her for her refusal to give up the child to his care, and in every way showed a churlish and ungenerous spirit toward her. M. D. Conway, in speaking of his hardness toward her, remarks: "It was a hard struggle with

the poor widow, between her duty to the memory of Shelley; and that toward her son, whose welfare and education imperatively demanded the annual loan (made to her by Sir Timothy, to be repaid when her son entered upon his inheritance), and the result is, we have to thank the crabbed old baronet, not only for our want of a real biography of Shelley, but also for the silence of the authoress of 'Frankenstein,' at the period of the ripeness of her genius."

This paragraph conveys the idea that Mrs. Shelley wrote nothing after her return to England — an erroneous idea, as she, in fact, wrote a great deal: supporting herself and helping her father with the results of her literary toil. But there can be no doubt that the course pursued by the baronet toward her had the effect of silencing the true expression of her views; therefore we have no means of learning positively what those views were, although in the Shelley "Memorials" she states distinctly that she never had been an Atheist, while she gives

at the same time the impression that she was an ultra-liberal Deist.

Soon after her return to England, her second novel, "Valperga," was published. For this work she was paid by the publishers £400. This sum she presented to her father, who at that time was struggling with some pecuniary difficulties. "The Last Man" was her next production, published in 1824; "Perkin Warbeck" was published in 1830; "Lodore," in 1835; "Falkner," in 1837. She edited the "Works and Letters of Shelley" in 1839-40, and some years later wrote the somewhat incomplete "Memorials." In addition to these labors, she wrote all the Italian and Spanish biographies in Lardner's "Encyclopedia," excepting those of Tasso and Galileo; two volumes entitled "Rambles in Germany," descriptive of the travels of her son and his tutor; and was for some years a contributor to the "Annuals," once so fashionable in England. So it is very evident that she was not "silenced." She was only a mental

prisoner on parole ; her hostage, the interests of her darling boy.

At first she made her home with her father, between whom and herself there still existed the firm, true friendship which always characterized their relationship ; but in furtherance of her one supreme care in life, the welfare of her Shelley's child, she left her father, so as to be near the schools to which her boy was sent ; going to reside for that purpose first at Kentish-town, and afterward at Harrow.

Young, talented, and lovely as she was, there can be no doubt that she was sought after in marriage by those who could have placed her above the drudgery of her pen ; but her heart was in that grave at Rome, where Shelley's ashes reposed, and she was too proud of the honor of his name to exchange it for that of any other man.

In 1836, William Godwin died, aged eighty—full of years, as of honors ; and in 1844 the death of Sir Timothy secured to Percy Shelley the succession to the baron-

etcy, and to his mother immunity from pecuniary cares, as well as freedom of expression. But this immunity came too late; she was growing old herself, and, if even she had cared to take an active part in the defense of her views, she had no longer either incentive or ambition to take the trouble to do so. Her only literary labor after this time was a labor of love, in preparing and writing the Shelley "Memorials." She died in 1851, seven years after the death of Sir Timothy, in the fifty-fourth year of her age.

A costly monument was erected by Sir Percy Shelley in Christchurch, near Bournemouth, England, to the memory of his father and mother, in 1854. "It is a fine work of art," says M. D. Conway, describing it, "representing Mary Shelley supporting on her lap the lifeless body of her husband, just after it has been washed ashore. The prow of a boat near by suggests the dreary story which none can forget." But neither of the bodies rest beneath this stately mausoleum,

Shelley's ashes being still at Rome, while Mary Shelley lies in a churchyard at Bournemouth. Beside her rest also the remains of both her parents, Sir Percy and his wife having had them removed from St. Pancras churchyard, where they were originally buried. The orthodox preacher who officiated in the church to which this graveyard belongs objected seriously to having the bodies of such notorious heretics interred within its sacred precincts, but the present Lady Shelley, wife of Sir Percy, evidently a woman of determination and spirit, as well as an enthusiastic admirer of the noble dead whom she wished thus to pay honor to, made up her mind that the bodies should be buried there; and, says Mr. Conway, my authority for this statement, "one day actually came from Christchurch in her carriage, following a hearse which bore the bodies. She sat in her carriage before the locked iron gates, and expressed her resolution to sit there until the bodies were admitted for burial. The rector, dreading

perhaps the scandal which would be caused, yielded; the gravedigger did his work with haste; and by night, without any ceremonial, the bodies were let down into their graves.

“When afterward the baronet and his lady wished to place over the graves a marble slab, the rector again protested, on account of the inscription, which said that Mary Wollstonecraft was the author of ‘A Vindication of the Rights of Woman.’ Lady Shelley asked him rather pointedly if he had ever read Mary Wollstonecraft’s book; and he having said he had not, she said he had better read it, and state his objections afterward. So she sent him the volume, and he read it. He then said he could not find fault with it, and so the inscription went on.”

Of her own silence on the subject, which her mother had so much at heart, Mrs. Shelley writes thus half-apologetically: “If I have never written to vindicate the rights of woman, I have ever befriended women when oppressed. At every risk I have be-

friended and supported victims to the social system ; but in truth it is but simple justice.”

Save as a matter of principle and education, perhaps, more than this could hardly have been expected of her, as hers had not been the bitter experiences of Mary Wollstonecraft in the relations of daughter and wife ; for William Godwin and Shelley were both firm believers in equal rights, and the first no more resembled a John Edward Wollstonecraft than the latter did an Imlay.

Of Mrs. Shelley's personal appearance in the early days of her wedded life, Shelley himself gives us this description, in a poem addressed to her at that time :

“And what art thou? I know, but dare not speak ;  
Time may interpret to his silent years ;  
Yet in the paleness of thy silent cheek,  
And in the light thine ample forehead wears,  
And in thy sweetest smiles, and in thy tears,  
And in thy gentle speech, a prophecy  
Is whispered to subdue my fondest fears ;  
And through thine eyes, even in thy soul I see  
A lamp of vesper fire burning eternally.”

Robert Dale Owen, who met her in Paris in 1827, and who very nearly, if not quite, fell in love with her, thus describes her at the age of twenty-nine or thirty :

“She impressed me as a person with warm social feelings, dependent for happiness on loving encouragement, needing a guiding and sustaining hand.

“In person she was of middle height and graceful figure. Her face, though not regularly beautiful, was comely and spiritual, of winning expression, and with a look of inborn refinement, as well as culture. It had a touch of sadness when at rest.

“Mrs. Shelley shared many of my opinions, and respected them all.”

I am aware how incomplete this sketch of Mary Shelley is, but my materials were more scant than I could have wished them to be, although perhaps I have said all that is necessary.

I have given her name a place in this collection of Freethinking women, not so

much for what she said or did, as for what she was, and because of the many associations which cluster around the names she bore—associations calculated to arouse a glow of enthusiastic feeling in every Freethinkers' heart.

GEORGE SAND.



## GEORGE SAND.

(MADAME DUDEVANT.)

AS I write this name, which to-day I hold in the deepest reverence and respect, I recall—with a smile at my own ignorance — the terror and vague dislike which were the first emotions which the sight of it awakened in me, and in thousands of others, who, like me, had been taught that it was the synonym of all that was evil in woman's nature. It was a name not to be spoken publicly, to be only whispered in low, secret tones, as the name of a wrong-headed, bad-hearted, and immoral woman, who flaunted her sins openly in the face of the world, but who yet had still womanly delicacy enough left in her

not to shame the holy baptismal woman's name bestowed upon her in innocent childhood, by shouldering upon it the weight of her wicked writings, and had hid that name under the masculine *nom de plume* which had become a bugbear to all pure-minded, well-disposed people. I had never read in those callow days — the days when I held ignorance to be the only true innocence — even so much as a line of this terrible woman's writings. I took my cue from the Sunday - school and newspaper literature, which mentioned her only to condemn, and it was with the utmost astonishment that, reading "Consuelo," before I knew who its author was, I found all my preconceived ideas concerning her morality utterly upset and overturned when I learned that "Consuelo" was one of her wickedest books. Since then, I trust, I have learned to value George Sand at her own high worth, and have brought myself to confess that her mistakes and eccentricities are not for me, or others like me, with natures and expe-

riences widely differing from hers, to call in question or to sit in judgment upon. With views of the marriage relation widely differing from those of George Sand, and believing in good faith that I can perceive wherein many of her ideas are Utopian and impracticable, I yet hope that I am capable of doing justice to the purity of her motives and the bravery of her life. And I hold the gifted Mrs. Browning the higher in estimation in that she was clear-sighted enough to recognize this maligned and defiant woman's grand genius and lofty attitude among writers, in spite of the dissimilarity of opinion which existed between these two exalted natures. Is not Mrs. Browning's insight into the character of George Sand true and clear as she addresses her thus :

“True genius, but true woman! dost deny  
Thy woman's nature with a manly scorn,  
And break away the gauds and armlets worn  
By weaker women in Captivity?  
Ah, vain denial! that revolted cry  
Is sobbed in by a woman's voice forlorn ;  
Thy woman's hair, my sister, all unshorn,

Floats back dishevelled strength in agony,  
Disproving thy man's name; and while before  
The world thou burnest in a poet fire,  
We see thy woman's heart beat evermore  
Through the large flame;"——

Amintine Lucile Aurore Dupin was born in the province of Berry, some time in the year 1804. Her father's family was an extremely old and aristocratic one, and possessed of a good but not remarkably wealthy estate. Her father, Maurice Dupin, an officer in the Imperial Army, had incurred his mother's severe displeasure by falling in love without first consulting her, and afterward marrying a pretty girl belonging to the tradesmen class, which she considered infinitely beneath her. But before Maurice Dupin had attained his thirtieth year, he was killed by a fall from his horse, leaving his wife with several young children, all boys but Aurore, to care and to provide for, and with very little means of providing for them.

Madame Dupin, the elder, offered to take

charge of her son's children on condition that their mother resigned all claim upon them, and herself returned to her own people. The young widow preferred to keep her boys to herself, but as the little Aurore was only an infant, and would harass her mother in her efforts to gain a livelihood for herself and the others, she was sent to her grandmother, who formally adopted her, and under whose care she remained until the death of that lady.

But Madame Dupin, the grandmother, was scarcely the right person, and her home was scarcely the right kind of a home in which, to bring up and educate such an ardent, impetuous, passionate, and intense nature as the little Aurore possessed, who would, probably, have turned out a far different sort of being had she remained under the care of her mother, and with the companionship of her brothers. But at Nohant she had no suitable companions of her own age; her grandmother was a woman of strong character, of considerable genius, of

heartly likings and dislikings, of proud, aristocratic tendencies, in spite of a theoretical republicanism on which she prided herself. Her intimate friends were few, but of congenial tastes and pursuits: people of learning, mind, and character, and of her own age. Thus the ardent, yet thoughtful little girl was left much to herself, and to odd, strange fancies, the result, in part, of her lonely hours, in part of the strange philosophic conversations which she heard in her grandmother's drawing-rooms, and in part of the speculative and dreamy books with which her grandmother's library was filled, and to which she had free access.

Aurore sought relief from her loneliness in the society of Nature, roving the woods and fields which surrounded her grand, stately, but gloomy home for hours together, or going off on horseback for forest rides of many miles. In the woods and glades she found that companionship she missed so much, and needed more even than she knew. It was in her fresh youth

that she began, as Justin McCarthy remarks of her, to "look directly and lovingly into the face of Nature, and learned the secrets which skies and water, fields and lanes, can teach the heart that loves them."

Longing, in this cold, isolated life, for the society of her mother and brothers, as only an intense, passionate, lonely child can long for the needs denied it, was it strange that she soon came to secretly hate the aristocratic, domineering spirit of caste which separated her from them, and that she dreamed happy, impossible dreams of the days to come, when she should be free to seek the beloved, and to enjoy their society? Aurore's education was by no means neglected. She had the best of masters in everything, and her grandmother was anxious that she should be thoroughly educated and accomplished, as became a daughter of the aristocratic Dupins. But though she was an apt scholar, she gave her teachers many a start and shock by her daring words and actions, and often upset the staid

dignity of her grandmother by some wild, unexpected prank.

Madame Dupin was an admirer of Rousseau and his philosophy, and the conversations held upon them by herself and friends were eagerly drank in by the unobserved little girl, and to these conversations may be ascribed many of George Sand's revolutionary ideas in after-life, as well as to the fact that she was an enthusiastic reader of his works when still but a child in years.

Is it not natural that that which we crave the most, and yet thus craving are constantly denied, we invest with an undue and fictitious importance? So it happened with Aurore. Love of all kinds seemed to be denied her. The companionship and tenderness of her only living parent, the pleasures of youthful friendship, the society of the young of both sexes—these were all inaccessible to her. The needs of her social nature being ignored, she was forced to satisfy her hungry sympathies by filling her little world with ideal

personages, and thus her vivid imagination was allowed to run riot without that salutary check which experience of the real in life gives to that faculty.

But in spite of these omissions, I suspect that her grandparent thought that she had well fulfilled the hard duty she had undertaken in the care and education of this untamable grandchild of hers, for the young girl, with her impulsive nature, could not have been easy of government. There was a tendency to masculine daring in Aurore not at all pleasant to deal with or to contemplate, especially when it was desirous to have her turn out a model young lady, such as French girls are always expected to be before marriage. There were long, daring rides on horseback, and lonely, unattended tramps through field and forest; rebellions against authority by both word and act; endeavors to set aside the elder, firmer will—which, we can imagine, did not conduce to the grandmother's comfort or complacency of mind.

But the slow years went by, and in time, when about fifteen, she was sent, as most well-born French girls are, to a convent in Paris to finish her education. Here she went through the various stages of feeling which an ardent, imaginative girl of that age would be likely to experience when exposed to the influences of a religion which is strongly tinctured with mysticism, and which appeals only to the emotional part of our natures. She grew devout, penitent, and pious, and longed for the apparent quiet happiness of the holy sisterhood—a happiness and calm all the more enticing because it was so diametrically opposed to her own unresting vehemence of character. She thought seriously of entering as a novice, but, fortunately for her, this phase of feeling passed away before it congealed into a fixed purpose.

When she was about sixteen, her grandmother died, and she was left heiress of the Dupin estate at Nohant. It would not do for a young and unmarried French girl

to live alone—without some female guardian residing with her to give that aspect of propriety which is so essential to respectability. Aurore was glad of this, as it gave her an excuse to ask her mother to come and live with her, a request which the younger Madame Dupin readily complied with; and so at last, after long years of separation, the mother and child were reunited. But Aurore's imagination, unchecked by experience, had pictured in too vivid hues the pleasures of this reunion. Mother and daughter, in all the years of their separation, had unavoidably, but steadily, been growing away from each other, and nothing save the tenderest love, the clearest wisdom, the finest tact could have brought them into true unison at this late date. These, we may be sure, were wanting, at least on one side, and probably on both; and Aurore found herself as unhappy in her mother's society as she had ever felt in her grandmother's. In spite of her democratic *theorics*, Aurore's education and surround-

ings had made her likings, needs, and tastes those of an aristocrat ; while Madame Dupin was a true daughter of the people, not perhaps in theory, like her daughter, but in manners, thoughts, and ambitions. Hers had been a busy, active, earnest life, which had left little room therein for dreams or speculative theories. The knowledge slowly dawned on Aurore's mind that her mother was in nowise "congenial"; that she could not be to her the *confidante* and sympathizing friend for whom she so longed. There was no open rupture between them, but their position toward each other was mutually embarrassing and hampering. Aurore did not like the opposition to many of the eccentricities and habits which had grown upon her in the isolated life she had led ; she longed with all her heart to be *free*, truly free ; to live her own life, to follow her own inclinations. But unless she set society at defiance, for which she was not then quite ready, she could not be free, so long as she remained unmarried. Mar-

riage is the French girl's only safe avenue to even partial freedom of life. Aurore was only eighteen, was living on her estate in a retired way, in a retired part of the country. There were not many eligible young men of her own class in the vicinity, and so she had little opportunity for choice of suitors, and when M. Dudevant, a young man of twenty-seven, an officer in the Imperial Army, of a highly respectable family, of irreproachable character, and a near neighbor, offered himself to her mother as an applicant for the hand of Aurore, his offer was gladly accepted by both. Aurore saw in his offer only an avenue of escape from tiresome conventionalities, and her mother was glad to be thus happily rid of the care of this unmanageable and eccentric daughter, while she hoped that the joys and cares of wifehood would soften and tone down this too exuberant nature. No one could accuse her of not having done her duty by her daughter, since she had secured for her a thoroughly eligible husband, upon whose

shoulders she very gladly shifted her responsibility.

Perhaps—for she was only eighteen, remember—Aurore had also her dream of love, and of the satisfying of the supreme need of a true woman's soul in this marriage, even if it was one of convenience. If so, she was doomed to disappointment. M. Dudevant was a calm, dogmatic, commonplace man, incapable of the slightest comprehension of an ardent, rapturous, grand nature such as that of his young wife. Genius and all its attendant eccentricities was a mystery and a bore to him. He was eminently respectable, dull, and commonplace; but he knew that all law, order, and precedent demanded that man should rule, that woman should obey, despite of all, or any, natural superiorities or inferiorities on either side. When he had once said that he loved a woman, or had implied as much in an offer of marriage, that was sufficient for a lifetime. Of the rhapsodies, the ecstasies, the poetry, the despair of love, he knew

little, and cared less. He walked always on life's levels; the heights and depths were to him undiscovered and undiscoverable. To a woman like himself he would have made a model husband; to a woman of George Sand's keen sensibilities, impassioned and impulsive nature, life with this stolid, matter-of-fact man became a series of battles against trivialities and pettinesses, which soon became too hard to be borne.

What she suffered before she took the decisive step which placed her in such a state of active hostility against marriage and marriage laws, we of less sensitive natures may not know: nor, perhaps, can we guess what the Baron, her husband, suffered from the flightiness, the eccentricities, and the mysticisms of his beautiful and romantic wife. At any rate, she avers that he agreed to the separation between them willingly enough, so long as she left him in possession of her estate. The separation took place while she was still quite young—only about twenty-four. Gossip says that other

motives than her desire for independence were the cause of her leaving him—that her meeting with Jules Sandeau, a young journalist, at a romantic spot where she had repaired for her health for a few months, was the primary cause of her dissatisfaction with M. Dudevant, and that she left her home in order to be near her lover in Paris. But that she took her little children along with her, and ever proved to them the most devoted of mothers, is evidence that other considerations than absorbing love for any man induced her to take this step.

She went direct to Paris, where she had a bitter struggle even to live. She had a little money at command at first, and so for a while managed to live comfortably; but too soon her means were exhausted, and she found that she must turn her talents to some definite purpose, in order to make a livelihood for herself and children. For several years she found this slow, hard work. At first she tried painting, in which she was proficient; then, by-and-by, she turned her

attention to literature. If she had many and various lovers, as is alleged of her, she failed, at least, to make them pecuniarily useful. She did make use of her lover Sandeau, in so far as to adopt part of his name as her *nom de plume*. She chose to appear before the public under a masculine guise, for already she had learned that the world is more lenient in its criticism and judgment of a man than it is of a woman. The petty, superficial homage paid to youth and beauty in a woman did not deceive her.

But hard and laborious as her new life was, she gloried beyond measure in its freedom. Freedom! Liberty! these were joy-breathing, magic words to her; and enjoying the reality of them, she laughed gayly in the face of shocked society, and dared to take still another innovating step, in freeing herself from a dress she found inconvenient and expensive, donning for street and business purposes the male student's more convenient attire.

Even in her new vocation as novelist,

the same spirit of liberty ruled the emanations of her brain. She was young, imaginative, passionate, and she dared express her real feelings in her books. This, perhaps, is the true secret of her success—that being truthful in the expression of her own overflowing, exuberant emotions, she was thus enabled to portray the reality of the same feelings in others. Whatever may have been the faults of George Sand, deception or hypocrisy was not numbered among them. Whether the virtue of truthful frankness of speech did not partake of the nature of a fault in her, I leave for others to determine. If in her later works there is missed that expression of the passions which marked so strongly her first literary ventures, it is not because she has learned to conceal her real opinions, in deference to the public, but because the season of emotion has passed away for her, and she cannot write of that which is not to her a living reality. So her stories of to-day are more like what we might expect from her

cooler blood and the stronger good sense which must mark the mature age which is now hers.

After she began in earnest her career as a novelist, it was not long before her works attracted attention and criticism. Those first strong, enthusiastic, and powerfully passionate books caused her name to be held up as a bugbear to young readers by their elders, a proceeding which only made those juniors seek her works all the more eagerly.

As she became successful both in point of reputation and in fortune, she was sought out, and became soon the center of the Parisian *litterati*. Her iconoclastic opinions and daring mode of life, together with her prominence as a writer, caused all sorts of wild stories and vague rumors to get afloat concerning her. Out of all these it would be difficult to sift out and recognize that which is true from that which is false.

Until within the last ten years, George

Sand has not been estimated at her highest worth by the critics of this country and of England. Here and there one clearer-eyed than the others saw some good in her. Among these, and one of the first to say an appreciative word, was Margaret Fuller, who more than twenty years ago wrote thus, in her "Woman in the Nineteenth Century":

"George Sand we esteem to be a person of strong passions, but of original nobleness, and a love of right, sufficient to guide them all to the service of worthy aims."

"In power, indeed, Sand bears the palm above all other French novelists. She is vigorous in conception, often great in the apprehension and contrast of characters. She knows passion, as has been hinted, at a *white* heat, when all the lower particles are re-moulded by its power. Her descriptive talent is very great, and her poetic feeling exquisite."

"It is impossible not to see in her not only the distress and doubts of the intellect,

but the temptations of a sensual nature ; but we see, too, the courage of a hero, and a deep capacity for religion."

"But we know through her works that, whatever the stains on her life and reputation may have been, there is in her a soul so capable of goodness and honor as to depict them most successfully in her ideal forms."

Of her writings and their influence, Margaret Fuller, herself as pure and good a woman as American literature has ever known, says further: "All is open, noble; the free description, the sophistry of passion, are, at least, redeemed by a desire for truth as strong as ever beat in any heart."

"To the weak or unthinking, the reading of such books may not be desirable, for only those who take exercise as men can digest strong meat. But to any one able to understand the position and circumstances, we believe this reading cannot fail of bringing good impulses, valuable suggestions; and it is quite free from that subtle miasma

which taints so large a portion of French literature, not less since the Revolution than before."

The day has come — and, fortunately, while George Sand still lives and writes—when Margaret Fuller stands not alone in her opinion as to the merits of this writer, even here in America. She stands now the acknowledged head of French fiction writers ; and those who once blushed at the mere mention of her name have come to look forward with lively interest to each new work from her pen, while she has won for herself high encomiums from the severest critics.

In the hard years of conflict with poverty and contumely, she was forced to engage in other conflicts, which gave her many bitter hours of pain and disquiet. As her children grew from helpless childhood to an age when they could dispense with her care and protection—though not to an age when she could dispense with their love and society—their father endeavored to gain pos-

session of them, appealing to the law to enforce his claims. This proceeding was a most unwise one on his part. Since he was not content with the wealth she had bestowed freely on him, but wanted also these, her only remaining wealth, she was roused into defiance of him, and determined that she would also deprive him of her property. She also appealed to the law, and after many years of litigation, at a time when she was no longer in need, gained her suit, and with it her estate at Nohant, together with the sole charge of her children. This decision did not save her from the many toilsome years of poverty, but it restored to her her own, and granted to her the privilege of spending the last years of her life, where she had spent the first, amid the memories and memorials of that dreamy, lonely, yet not wholly unhappy childhood. There she has ever since made her home, and there she still lives, mature in years, but still strong in spirit, and spends hours with her pen, which has not

yet lost its point or vigor, albeit she is somewhat near seventy years of age.

When I say that George Sand to-day is estimated at her highest worth, I do not mean to say that there are not still many who look upon her life and writings with disfavor, but only that all that is best in her writings has come to be acknowledged and admired; whereas the time has been when it would have been considered treason to literature to have admitted that there was, underneath all the wickedness of her warmth of description anything whatever to admire. That some critics already rate her as a pure moral writer, rather than as one who has done more evil than good, let the following extracts from Justin McCarthy's "Modern Leaders" attest:

"George Sand's genius has been felt as a power in every country of the world where people read any manner of books. It has been felt as Rousseau's once was felt; it has aroused anger, terror, pity, or wild and rapturous excitement; it has rallied around

it every instinct in man or woman which is revolutionary ; it has ranged against it all that is conservative."

"Her influence on French literature has been on the whole a purifying and strengthening power. The cynicism, the recklessness, the wanton licentiousness ; the disregard of any manner of principle ; the debasing parade of disbelief in any higher purpose or nobler restraint—which are the shame and curse of modern French fiction writers, finds no sanction in the pages of George Sand. I remember no passage in her works which gives the slightest encouragement to the 'nothing new, and nothing true, and it don't signify' code of ethics. I find nothing in George Sand which does not do homage to the existence of a principle and a law in everything."

"I claim for her at least four great and special merits. First, she insisted on calling public attention to the true principle of marriage ; that is to say, she put the question as it had not been put before. . . .

Secondly, her works are an exposition of the tremendous reality of the feelings which people who call themselves practical are apt to regard with indifference or contempt, as mere sentiments. . . . Thirdly, she insists that man can and shall make his own career, not whine to the stars, and rail out against the powers above, when he has weakly or wantonly marred his own destiny. . . . Fourthly, she has tried to teach people to look at Nature with their own eyes, and to invite the true love of her to flow into their hearts."

"There is in her nothing unmeaning, nothing untrue; there is in her much error, doubtless, but *no sham*."

In the last sentence quoted McCarthy touches the key-note of this woman's whole character. She is true to what she knows of herself throughout, at whatever expense of fortune, of reputation, of friendship, or of love. She may be misunderstood, defamed, disgraced; but she stands erect and defiant through all, "armed so strong with

honesty" that she can dispense with all these until such time as she can win them without sacrificing that which she holds dearest—her liberty of conscience, of thought, and of action.

The critic of a well-known Chicago journal says of her :

“But with all that may be excepted, George Sand is a great name in current literature. No candid critic can deny that she has written with consummate skill, and merely as a writer has hardly an equal in the world. To appreciate this, recourse must be had, of course, to the original of her works. But a translation will show another point, in which, undoubtedly, this singular personage has lifted a torch of wonderful light above the path of modern society, in her delineation of the workings of the human soul under the influence of the passion of love. And it is pure love, the purest and the truest, which Madame Dudevant has most delighted to paint, and the picture of which in her writings will

make her best known to lovers of wisdom and masters of knowledge in this and in the coming time. . . History will name this woman among the truly illustrious persons of this century."

A genius so determinately truthful as hers; which did not ignore, but rather brought out in the strongest light, all emotions and feelings; which dared to be, and to live, that which others only dreamed of—drew around her, as a matter of course, the choicest of original minds in the world of letters. Even those who denounced were not content not to know this singular woman, who had had the temerity to think independently, and to boldly express that thought, however much she might thereby seem to differ from the old standards of opinion. Her very defiance and carelessness of the world have been the means of bringing that world to acknowledge and bend to her. But that would be a dangerous experiment for one to try whose genius was not equal and all-sufficient for the occasion,

as hers has been. Without her broad, comprehensive mind, her wide range of study, her persevering energy of character, which added culture and knowledge to the luxuriant vividness and fervid strength of her imagination, it may be that her defiance and independence would have availed little in winning for her the reputation which is now hers.

Men could not treat her with the contempt they would have liked to, so long as she proved herself in so many respects their superior. The master mind conquered as ever, not by accident of birth, or of circumstances, but by skilful direction of the force of her genius. In marking out a path in life for herself, she bent every energy to fitting herself thoroughly for the work to which she had determined to devote herself.

Independent and self-reliant in all things else, it cannot be a matter of surprise that she is independent in her religious opinions, nor that those opinions are far from being

what are deemed orthodox. Perhaps her own words will best express her religious faith, or, rather, her lack of any religious faith. She says: "If I make use of the expression 'God,' it is only to refer to one of the loveliest of hypotheses which the human mind has ever conceived, and which expresses only the complete *good* which we all seek. I appreciate and respect your faith (Theism), but cannot share it with you. In the future, my friend, make up your mind to respect those who love the truth, even if they seek it in a light that you consider deceptive."

I do not seek to make out that George Sand is either a perfect or a pattern woman, but since her genius and her truthfulness place her somewhat beyond the reach of our poor criticism, let us do her the easy justice of forbearing to judge her from our own standpoint of orthodoxy and propriety, and take her advice regarding those who love the truth; for that she does love it, so far as she understands it, her course

of action has amply testified, since she has valued it so much more highly than she has valued public opinion.

So, although it is doubtless quite true that she has done, and does, many of those things of which she is accused, and for which she is censured, such as having worn male apparel, smoked cigarettes, left her husband in defiance of law, and even now, it is said, although nearly seventy, sets Nature's laws at naught by devoting the hours from midnight till morning to her writing, in defiance of all the principles of hygiene—still, let us refrain from troubling our mind about these things, which are nothing to us, and let us rather learn to emulate the virtues of her character, her truthfulness, sincerity, faith in humanity, and love of Nature.

George Sand has been a prolific writer. Each year since her first introduction to the reading public she has written one, sometimes two or three, novels or novellettes. The titles of her works, even if I

possessed a complete list, would be found too numerous to be reproduced here. "Indiana" and "Consuelo," among her earlier works, are those by which she is best known. Of these the last-mentioned is by far the most powerfully written and interesting. Of one of her latest novels the *Golden Age* thus speaks: "'Nanon' has all the finest qualities of her best writings. It is an historical novel, and more philosophical in spirit than most histories of the French Revolution. No line of this interesting work betrays the slightest diminution of the author's intellectual powers, or the withering of her large, genial sympathies."

AFTER the foregoing sketch was written and ready for the press came the news of the death of George Sand, on the 8th of June, 1876. In accordance with her wishes, no religious ceremonies were performed over her remains save a short prayer, which was insisted upon by the Catholic priest of the diocese, as essential to his permission to

allow the body to be buried in consecrated ground. Victor Hugo delivered the funeral oration over her grave, in the course of which he thus eulogized her :

“She is the one great woman in this century whose mission it was to finish the French Revolution, and commence the revolution of Humanity. Equality of the sexes being a branch of the equality of men, a great woman was necessary. It was for a woman to prove that her mind might possess all gifts, without losing a particle of her angelic nature—might at once be strong and gentle. George Sand was that woman. She is one of the glories of our age and country. She had a great heart like Barbes, a great mind like Balzac, and a great soul like Lamartine. She was good, and accordingly she had detractors, but the insults to her were of that kind which posterity will count as glories.”

With this tribute from one great mind to another, I close my imperfect testimony to her worth.



HARRIET MARTINEAU.



## HARRIET MARTINEAU.

“**F**EELING, as I do, daily comfort in the knowledge of some things which I should once have shrunk from supposing, it would be weak—as foolish as cowardly—ever again to shrink from knowing anything that is true, or to have any preferences whatever among unascertained matters of speculation or fact.” (“Letters on the Laws of Man’s Nature and Development,” page 12.)

“From the moment a man desires to find the truth on one side rather than another, it is all over with him as a philosopher.” (*Ibid*, page 11.)

In these brave utterances may be found the keynote of Harriet Martineau’s life and character: a life which has been from phys-

ical causes necessarily isolated and reflective; a character which, naturally rarely sympathetic and womanly, from these same causes has been made almost masculine in its intellectual scope and pursuits.

Harriet Martineau was born in 1802, one of the youngest of the eight children of a Norwich (England) silk manufacturer. Her brother, the Rev. James Martineau, whose name has attained a celebrity nearly equal to her own, is the nearest to her in age. The silk manufactory of which her father was proprietor was established in Norwich soon after the revocation of the Edict of Nantes by Louis XIV, which drove the Martineaus, with thousands of their fellow Huguenots, from France to England. The same stern, unyielding love of truth, the same strict integrity of conscience, which caused her progenitors to give up home, friends, and wealth, and led them to try their fate in a foreign and uncongenial land, appears again in a somewhat different form in this brave, conscientious woman, their de-

scendant, who has dared "for conscience' sake" to avow in the face of a shocked Christianity her disbelief of an unproven revelation, her honest doubts of the so-called "proofs" of a creative, designing, and constantly interfering power called God.

At the time of Harriet's birth the Martineaus, though not wealthy, were in comfortable and easy circumstances. The education given to the children was solid rather than showy, though the accomplishments fitted to their station in life were not overlooked or neglected; and Harriet, in spite of her increasing deafness, was sent to singing-schools, and was an accomplished performer upon the piano until her growing infirmity caused her to lose all relish for the amusement. Her parents seem to have always encouraged a taste for all useful and scientific knowledge in their children, and to have cultivated in them a love for the beautiful in Nature, judging from fragmentary instances given incidentally by Miss

Martineau in relating her own childish experiences.

Harriet was a delicate, ailing child from birth, but possessed of a deeply reflective intellect, and strong, intense feelings. It may be that the strong mind proved too heavy a strain upon the weaker physical system, and so caused some of her later ailments. "I have never," she says, "had the sense of smell, nor, therefore, much sense of taste; and before I was twenty I had lost the greater part of my hearing. When my companions give me notice of distant objects by means of any of these senses—when they tell me what is growing in an invisible field or garden, or where there is music, or what people are saying on the farther side of a reach of the lake on a calm summer evening, I feel a sort of start, as if I were in company with sorcerers."

With these drawbacks upon social intercourse and enjoyment, combined with her natural taste and inclination for study, she necessarily gave free play to her reflective

and imaginative faculties, finding in them her chief source of recreation and enjoyment. Such an unusual set of conditions must yield, of course, some results of unusual experience. She says, speaking of this phase of her life :

“It seems to me that for want of the ‘distraction’ commonly enjoyed through the play of the senses, there is too little relief to the action of the busiest parts of the brain.”

It was, perhaps, owing to the lack of this “distraction” made by the full exercise of all the senses that many of her strange experiences in mesmerism and clairvoyance are due. That even as a child her state of mind was in some respects a strangely peculiar and abnormal one is evidenced by several circumstances related by herself, among them the following :

“Let me tell you a curious thing which happened twice to me—the being unable by any effort to see a conspicuous object directly before my eyes—I suppose because I

must have had a wrong notion of what I was to see. When I was near seven years old I was taken to Tynemouth in a passion of delight because I was to see the sea. Aunt Margaret took me and an older and a younger one to the haven. There when standing on the bank we were expected to exclaim about the sea, which flowed up to the foot of the bank, directly before our eyes. The other two children were delighted, but I could not see it. When questioned I was obliged to say so, and I said it with shame and reluctance. I well remember the misery ; I believe it was thought affectation, like my indifference to scents. We were led down the bank, which was steep and difficult for children. Not till the gentle waves were at my very toes did I see the sea at all ; and then it gave me a start, and a painful feeling of being a sort of idiot not to have seen it before. The revelation at last was very like that of a lightning flash. It may be mentioned that my only previous sight of the sea was of

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something quite different. I was then under three years old—not strong on my feet—and my father led me along the old Yarmouth jetty, which was full of holes, through which I saw the swaying waters below, and was frightened—as I well remember. I may have been occupied with this idea on the second occasion. The other anecdote is yet more odd. When the great comet of 1811 appeared, I was nine years old. Night after night that autumn the whole family went up to the long range of windows in my father's warehouse to see the comet. I was obliged to go with them, but I never once saw it! My heart used to swell with disappointment and mortification. No effort was wanting on my part; and parents, brothers, and sisters used to point and say: 'Why, there! Why, it is as large as a saucer! You might as well say you cannot see the moon!' I could not help it; I never saw it, and I have not got over it yet. The only thing I can suppose is that I must have been looking for something

wholly different, and that no straining of the eyes avails if the mind is occupied with another image."

A more probable explanation of these singular experiences may perhaps be found in the intense nature of the child, who was "in a passion of delight" at the thought of looking upon the sea, and whose baby-heart swelled to bursting with disappointment and mortification at her failure to see the rare phenomena of nature. The too eager desire defeated its own object, and she did not see because she strained her vision by her too intense effort and anxiety; an experience not uncommon to us "children of a larger growth."

It was almost a necessity of such a nature that it should find expression through the pen at a very early age, but for some years this mode of expression was followed *only* as an amusement and recreation. It was not until after her twentieth year that she thought of turning her talent at composition to account. About that time her

family met with reverses in business, which made it necessary for her to look around her for means **by** which to help them and provide for her own **necessities**. Then her literary abilities and likings occurred to her as affording the most congenial and fitting occupation, and she at once entered upon that literary career which is even yet not quite forsaken by her. In common with most young writers, her pecuniary success was not at first remarkable, and she did not hesitate to increase her earnings during these first years of introduction to the literary world by her skill as needlewoman.

Her religious education had been in the Unitarian faith, and in devout religious thought her conscientious nature took its deepest pleasure. The first work she gave to the world, published in 1823, was an outgrowth of her fervid piety, and was entitled "Devotions for Young People," while her next was a religious novel, entitled "Christmas Day." In 1830, the British and Foreign Unitarian Association offered

prizes for the three best tracts "On the Introduction and Promotion of Christian Unitarianism among the Roman Catholics, the Jews, and Mohammedans." She competed for all three, and, singularly enough, won them all, though three separate sets of judges were appointed to compare the merits of the different essays. All through her literary career, theology and the basis of religious belief seem to have occupied the greater share of her attention and investigation, and to the thoroughness and fearlessness of these investigations is due the advanced position she has taken on these subjects; a position which is peculiarly hard for a woman to maintain, as she finds herself arrayed against all but an infinitesimal minority of her own sex, and is thus deprived of most of that affiliation and intellectual companionship which is peculiarly necessary to the feminine mind.

So fearless a thinker as Miss Martineau, as a matter of course, could not long refrain from joining the ranks of radical re-

form, and her trenchant pen could not long be withheld from telling pertinent truths. So we find among even her earlier productions hits at popular follies, and hints as to methods of overcoming some widespread public evils. Thus, in "The Rioters," "The Turnout," and other books written in 1827-8, she had in view illustrations of the workings of some political evils incident to the times, and the dissemination of her ideas as to the proper method of overcoming or avoiding them.

In 1831, she conceived the plan of publishing monthly tracts, illustrative of true and false political economy in regard to taxation, the poor laws, and paupers; but she met with considerable difficulty in finding a publisher willing to accept the responsibility of issuing the projected series. She tried one after another, undaunted by failures, until she succeeded in her search. These tracts, in the form of short tales, met with excellent success, and were, doubtless, the means of instructing many on

these subjects, who otherwise would never have given any attention whatever to them. "Independent of their value as expositions of great principles," writes a reviewer, "some of these tales will always be read for their truthful pictures of life, and the ingenious construction of a story limited by its special purpose." There are very few reforms of any prominence whatever which have not found in Harriet Martineau a powerful pleader and effective ally. Slavery found in her "The Hour and the Man" a bitter denunciation and a vivid portrayal; and during the American Slaveholders' Rebellion Miss Martineau's pen supplied on the other side of the water the warmest, friendliest, and most earnest articles in behalf of the Union written by any one not a native-born American.

In every department of life, however high or humble, her searching mind, fertile brain, and ready pen have done good and effective service. She has written on the forest and game laws, on household edu-

cation, and on health, husbandry, and handicraft. Even the needs of the little ones have not been forgotten or overlooked by this woman, whom no baby-lips have ever called "mother," but who bears within her bosom as warm a heart as even maternity could bestow; and her series of stories for children, entitled "The Playfellow," attests how rarely sympathetic is the nature of the translator of such works as "Comte's Positive Philosophy," and author of "The History of the Thirty Years' Peace."

As early as 1834, she had by her unremitting literary labor won for herself a reputation which extended to America, and her profits were such as to enable her in the autumn of that year to make a visit to the young republic with whose boasted freedom of thought and liberty of action she had long wished to acquaint herself from personal observation and experience. She remained in America for two years, and traveled during that time over nearly all sections of the country, acquainting herself

as minutely and thoroughly as possible with the habits, laws, politics, and even sectional prejudices, of the American people.

Whoever has read her "Society in America"—the literary result of her two years' sojourn here—cannot have failed to observe the fact that, while frankly stating her convictions as to what she considered the mistakes and exaggerations of this government "by the people, for the people," the whole book is yet permeated by a heartfelt, loving admiration of the Americans and their country. The one great stain on the national character, slavery (which she has fortunately lived to see blotted out), she speaks against boldly and frankly; but even here, where she felt so deeply and indignantly, she does not fail to speak justly and fairly, admitting that the Southern people—whose manifold good qualities she does full justice to—were misled by sophistical reasoning on this point, and were mistaken in their policy, rather than intentionally doing wrong.

Her detailed and circumstantial account of that memorable day—the 21st of October, 1835—when William Lloyd Garrison was mobbed in the streets of liberty-loving Boston for his brave efforts in behalf of Southern slaves, and when the Woman's Anti-Slavery Society, in defiance of the threats of that same mob, quietly met and transacted their business in a hall on Boston's principal street, lends an air of probability to the statement made by Henry C. Wright in his autobiography, that she was present at and participated in the business of that meeting. In her account of it, however, she does not explicitly state, nor lead the reader to infer, that she was thus present.

It would have been more than strange if a mind so comprehensive, so radical, so freedom-loving as hers had been blind to the shortcomings, the needs, and the wrongs of her own sex; but it is with a pleased surprise that we find, in the two chapters on woman in her "*Society in America*," views

so clear and advanced on the question, or questions, of "Woman's Rights." After a lapse of nearly forty years, during which time those rights have taken rapid strides toward recognition and adjustment, there can be found nothing in her statement of woman's demands and needs which is behind the most advanced ideas of the present day. And I very much doubt whether there can be found half a dozen other women who, at so early a stage of this progressive movement, put themselves so clearly and daringly on record as to their convictions on this subject as did Harriet Martineau.

"I declare," she says, on the 151st page of the second volume of her "Society in America," "that whatever obedience I yield to the laws of the society in which I live is a matter between, not the community and myself, but my judgment and my will. Any punishment inflicted on me for a breach of those laws I should regard as so much gratuitous injury, for to those laws I have never actually or virtually assented. I know there

are women in England who agree with me in this ; I know there are women in America who agree with me in this. The plea of acquiescence is invalidated by us."

The following few strong words, on page 231 of the second volume, places in its true light one of the most common and commonplace objections to woman's becoming interested in her own affairs: "The incessant outcry about the retiring modesty of the sex proves the opinion of the censors to be that fidelity to conscience is inconsistent with retiring modesty. If it be so, let the modesty succumb. It can only be a false modesty which can thus be endangered."

That life must be well worth living which is permitted to see its most advanced and cherished convictions realized. Such a life is likely to be Harriet Martineau's, and, when her "summons comes to join the innumerable caravan," she will not need to cry in anguish, "all is vanity and vexation of spirit"! for she has lived to see negro

slavery abolished, and English women, under certain restrictions, entitled to vote. Let us dare also to hope that, old as she is, she may yet live to see American women entitled to the same privilege.

I cannot forbear quoting from "Society in America" the following exquisite description of American forests, as a specimen of Miss Martineau's delicacy of expression, and her skill in word-painting :

"The English traveler finds himself never weary by day of prying into the forest from beneath its canopy ; or from a distance drinking in its exquisite hues ; and his dreams for months or years will be of the mossy roots, the black pine, and silvery birch stems, the translucent green shades of the beech, and the slender creeper. He will dream of the march of hours through the forest, the deep blackness of night broken by the dun forest fires. He will hear again the shrill piping of the whip-poorwill, and the multitudinous din from the occasional swamp. He will dream of

the deep silence which precedes the dawn ; of the gradual apparition of the haunting trees coming faintly out of the darkness ; of the first level rays instantaneously piercing the woods to the very heart, and lighting them up into boundless ruddy colonnades, garlanded with wavy verdure, and carpeted with glittering wild flowers. Or he will dream of the clouds of gay butterflies and gauzy dragon-flies that hover over the noon-day paths of the forest, or cluster about some graceful shrub, making it appear to bear all at once all the flowers of Eden. Or the golden moon will look down through his dream, making for him islands of light in an ocean of blackness. He may not see the stars but by glimpses ; but the winged stars of these regions—the gleaming fireflies—radiate from every sleeping bough, and keep his eye in fancy busy in following their glancing, while his spirit sleeps in the deep charms of the summer night.” (Vol. I, page 91.)

She returned to England in the autumn

of 1836, and "Society in America" was published in 1837. About this time her health became so broken down as for a time to interrupt her continuous literary activity, but only for a time. In the intervals of physical pain and nervous prostration, she made use of every available hour in writing. "From 1839 to 1844, she was a confirmed invalid" — I quote from "Half-hours with Freethinkers" — "and perhaps the best proof of the indefatigable nature of her character that has been afforded is the fact that even when prostrated on a bed of severe sickness she could not be idle. She published at this time her series of essays entitled 'Life in the Sick-room.' She was restored to partial health by mesmeric agencies."

"Life in the Sick-room" was not the only work she published during this protracted illness. "Deerbrook" and the "Play-fellow" were published in 1839; "The Hour and the Man" — a story written as a tribute to and recognition of the bravery and services of the noble slave, Toussaint L'Ouverture —

1841, besides three volumes of "Forest and Game Law Tales," "Feats on the Fiord," and "The Billow and Rock." This partial list of works, written by her while she was "a confirmed invalid," gives us something of an idea of the indomitable energy of this marvelous woman.

Of her cure by mesmerism I have been unable to obtain the particulars, although Miss Martineau refers to it often in her letters to Atkinson. It made her, at all events for many years, and for aught I know to this day, a firm believer in clairvoyance and mesmerism. And Mary Russel Mitford, in a letter written in the winter of 1845, says :

"Everybody is talking of Miss Martineau's *somnambulism*. She writes to Miss Barrett (Mrs. Browning), who forwards her letters to me. The last intelligence is that Lord Morpeth was on his knees, talking Greck and Latin and three modern languages to the poor girl, the Miss Liddells being present. When Imitation was touched

she translated what was said ; when Language, she replied to it."

During Miss Martineau's illness, in 1840, she was tendered the compliment of a pension from the English Government, as an acknowledgment of her services as a political writer, and the good she had accomplished by disseminating among the masses true views of political economy. But she was too sensitively just to be willing to accept this alluring offer, averring as her reason for declining it that she "considered herself a political writer, and the offer did not proceed from the people, but from the Government, which did not represent the people."

The spirit which dictated a reply like this to so tempting an offer may be considered quixotic, but it is a quixotism which is, in these days, alas ! too rare for the good of the public, among our male politicians, both writers and haranguers.

Her health being in a good measure restored, in 1846 she started with a com-

pany of friends on an Eastern tour of pleasure and observation. The trip included Egypt, Palestine, and Arabia. What good use she made of her eyes and ears—or perhaps I ought to say ear-trumpet—during that tour is attested by the charming and interesting book of travel which she wrote and published after her return, entitled “Eastern Life, Past and Present,” a book of which a writer (C. W. S.), in a recent number of the *Toledo Index*, says: “The book of all others that has seemed nearest to a revelation to me is Miss Martineau’s “Eastern Life,” a work which would probably have made a profound sensation in the literary world if it had not been published some thirty years ago, before that world was ripe for its reception. It contains a charming account of the author’s travels with some highly cultivated friends in Egypt and Palestine, with a most instructive essay on the life and purposes of Moses, and his dealings with the Israelites of old, and a wonderful history of ancient Egypt. I took

pains about a year ago to attend a course of lectures on this subject by Dr. Thompson, of New York, and was astonished to find how little that able man, who is said to have made it the chief study of his life, had to add to the knowledge imparted by Miss Martineau."

But at the time (1848) when "Eastern Life" was published, it created among Miss Martineau's friends and admirers an altogether different sort of "sensation" from that to which this writer refers. It was a sensation made up of consternation and regret at its publication.

Her theological opinions had for some years been slowly undergoing a radical change, but until the publication of this work she had never given open expression to that change; and when her former admirers found that in its pages she did not hesitate to avow her heterodox opinions, they were excessively shocked.

"Her work," says a Christian reviewer, "is exceedingly interesting, but it is marred

by the mocking spirit of Infidelity which she allows for the first time to darken her pages, and testify to the world her disbelief in the Divine revelation."

But the shock given to her Christian friends by her "Eastern Life" was as nothing compared to that given them three years later by the publication of the letters between herself and H. G. Atkinson, "On the Laws of Man's Nature and Development," in which she plainly avows her atheistical opinions.

"Miss Martineau's friend, Charlotte Bronte," remarks a writer in *Chambers's Journal*, "grieved sadly over this declension on the part of one whom she admired as combining the highest mental culture with the nicest discharge of feminine duties. The book, she said, was the first exposition of avowed atheism and materialism she had ever read — the first unequivocal declaration of a disbelief of God or a future life. Hundreds, she said, had deserted Miss Martineau on account of this book; but this the au-

thoress denies. 'I am not aware,' says Miss Martineau, 'of having lost any friends whatever by this book, while I have gained a new world of sympathy.' In fact, most persons regarded this singular lady as *sui generis*, and would never dream of binding her by the fixed and settled rules."

Indeed, Harriet Martineau was not one to allow her friendships, or any like selfish consideration, to overbalance her "fidelity to conscience," and the knowledge of her uncompromising honesty of character could not fail to make her friends respect and admire her, however much they might dissent from her conclusions on theology.

All through this book ("Laws of Man's Nature and Development") there runs a tone of glad defiance of what the world may choose to think of her, and of restful triumph over her own educational prejudices.

"To me it seems absolutely necessary, as well as the greatest possible relief," she says, on page 222, "to come to a plain understand-

ing with myself about it; and deep and sweet is the repose of having done so. There is no theory of a God, of an author of Nature, of an origin of the Universe, which is not utterly repugnant to my faculties; which is not (to my feelings) so irreverent as to make me blush; so misleading as to make me mourn. I can now hardly believe that it was I who once read Milton with scarcely any recoil from the theology; or, Paley's 'Natural Theology' with pleasure at the ingenuity of the mechanic-god he thought he was recommending to the admiration of his readers."

Again, on pages 288-9: "What an emancipation it is—to have escaped from the little enclosure of dogma, and to stand—far indeed from being wise—but free to learn!"

And again, on page 256: "Science can abolish nothing but what is unreal, and then only in order to substantiate what is real. Her office is to take out the vital principle from forms once beautiful, when

they begin to grow hideous with age, and to transfuse it into new forms of beauty, which we may love without fear and without disgust. She comes to relieve us from our hag-ridden state, and to bring about us forms as fresh as the morning, and as beautiful as the Spring."

It was between the publication of "Eastern Life" and her letters to Atkinson that Miss Martineau wrote and published her most elaborate and voluminous work, the "History of the Thirty Years' Peace," in four volumes, of which a late editorial in the Chicago *Evening Journal* remarks: "Nowhere else can so fair, so intelligent, and so accurate an account of men and measures in English history be found." Apart from her other writings, this work alone would have placed Miss Martineau's name in the front rank of the English writers of to-day.

That she still held firmly to her atheistical opinions was clearly shown by the appearance, in 1853, of her translation and

condensation of "Comte's Positive Philosophy," a work of great value as a concise and simplified abridgment of the great but frequently prolix and vague French philosopher. Her aim in compiling and publishing this work is best stated by herself in the introductory pages. She says:

"The growth of a scientific taste among the working classes of this country is one of the most striking of the signs of the times. I believe no one can inquire into the mode of life of young men in the middle and operative classes without being struck with the desire that is shown and the sacrifices that are made to obtain the means of scientific study. That such a disposition should be baffled, and such study rendered almost ineffectual, by the desultory character of scientific exposition in England, while such a work as Comte's was in existence, was not to be borne, if a year or two of humble toil could help, more or less, to supply the need."

The Lake Country in Cumberland has

been for many years, on account of its beautiful and picturesque scenery, the resort of many of England's most brilliant men of genius. Professor Wilson ("Christopher North"), the Coleridges, Wordsworth, Southey, De Quincey—these are some of the literary lights which have in past years frequented and illuminated this region. But we doubt if any of these, endeared as they all are to thousands to whom they gave voice and expression, will have a more enduring fame, or render more hallowed the lovely scenery which environs the lakes, than the quiet invalid who, debilitated in body, yet strong and serene in mind, still inhabits her little cottage at Ambleside, within a mile of Wordsworth's home, and from which, despite her advanced years and increasing ailments, she still occasionally sends out strong, trenchant words, where words are needed to help right any wrong. It is now more than twenty years since Miss Martineau first established herself at Ambleside, and in that quiet retreat some of her

later books have been written. Among these is her "Complete Guide to the Lakes," published in 1854. Whenever her health will permit, she takes pride and pleasure in those out-of-door pursuits which bring her face to face with Nature; and a tourist, writing some years ago, when her health was better than it now is, says: "She manages her little farm of two acres with the skill of a practical agriculturist, and is esteemed as an affectionate friend and good neighbor."

Since 1860, I think, she has published but two books: one a compilation from her contributions to "Once a Week," entitled "Health, Husbandry, and Handicraft"; the other, a series of brilliant "Biographical Sketches," of which a reviewer in "Old and New" speaks thus:

"If there be any irreverent doubters left among us as to the intellectual pretensions of woman, or her claims to fill any office whatever in Church or State, or in the halls of art or learning, let them read this vol-

ume, humbly confess their errors, and throw themselves upon the mercy of the sex. This is a wise, grand, charming book. . . . But the great charm of the book is its truthfulness; the irresistible feeling of conviction that it carries with it. However our prejudices may be disturbed at times, or our enthusiasm dampened, we are constrained to confess that we are reading facts of history, told by one who has studied them carefully, and weighed them impartially, and who, impelled alike by a sense of justice and a consciousness of her fitness for the task, proceeds to set them forth for the benefit of us all, without fear or favor, malice or exaggeration, in a forcible, clear, and graphic style, without any attempt at brilliant antithesis, or vain parade of uncalled-for embroidery; inflexibly stern and severe at times, and at others charmingly tender and compassionate, but ever in strictest subjection to truth. As we wander delighted from picture to picture, the wonder keeps growing upon us how a woman tried

by sickness for so large a portion of her life, and afflicted with deafness from early childhood, could have explored so successfully such vast and various fields of thought, have grappled with so many tough problems of Church and State, have penetrated behind so many scenes; searching the hearts of kings and courtiers, unearthing the secrets of cabals and cliques, ferreting out the tattle of clubs, and the scandal of drawing-rooms: and doing all this so calmly and intrepidly, without loss of dignity or delicacy, without giving way to ennui or disgust; but ever with even temper and unclouded judgment investigating and disentangling the facts as they pass in review before her, and announcing her opinions, often, indeed, with the brevity of an oracle, but never with any taint of its ambiguity or affectation. . . . In this delightful volume only one thing seems wanting to render it absolutely satisfactory to all readers, and that is a deeper feeling of religious enthusiasm and a more cordial

recognition of the claims of Christianity, and of the blessings which it has conferred."

Miss Martineau has counted among her personal friends many of the best and most brilliant minds in England and America—friends whom no difference of opinions could alienate from this large-hearted, large-brained, womanly woman. She has proved herself philosopher, historian, novelist, and politician—and always philanthropist through all. Not until another generation, perhaps, will she be estimated at her highest worth; but she is sure to be thus estimated in time.

Nathaniel Hawthorne, in his "English Note-Book," mentions meeting her, in this wise:

"I think I neglected to record that I saw Miss Martineau a few weeks since. She is a large, robust, elderly woman, and plainly dressed; but, withal, she has so kind, cheerful, and intelligent a face that she is pleasanter to look at than most beauties. . . . All her talk was about

herself and her affairs ; but it did not seem like egotism, because it was so cheerful and free from morbidness. And this woman is an atheist, and thinks that the principle of life will become extinct when her body is laid in the grave ! I will not think so, were it only for her sake. What ! only a few weeds to spring out of her mortality, instead of her intellect and sympathies flowing and fruiting forever."

Catherine Sedgewick, whose guest Miss Martineau was for a short time during her visit to America, gives the following description of her in her journal :

"Miss Martineau and her attendant have paid their last visit to our valley. I intended to have been diligent in taking notes of our extraordinary guest, but the time was so filled with quickly succeeding pleasures that it passed without any written record. She was here eight days. She has just returned from her Southern and Western tour. She has been honored, praised, and homaged, not to say wor-

shipped, by the great as well as the small. No woman has ever, perhaps, received so rich a recompense of reward ; and why? I think because her spirit and influence have been in harmony with the spirit of the age. Miss Martineau, with a single eye to the general good, has devoted herself, not to the intellectual amusement or advancement of the gifted and educated, but to make bread more plentiful in the husbandman's dwelling, and to still the cry of hunger forever in the poor man's cottage." " Her dress is simple, inexpensive, and appropriate. Her voice is too low-toned, but agreeable, the suitable organ of a refined spirit. Her manners, without any elegance, are pleasing, natural, and kind. She seldom speaks unless addressed, but in reply to a single touch she pours out a rich stream. She is never brilliant, never says a thing that is engraven or *cut in* to your memory, but she talks on a greater variety of topics than any one I ever heard—agreeably, most agreeably, and with sense and information. She is *womanly*,

strictly, with sympathies fresh from the heart, enthusiasms not always manifestly supported by reason ; now and then *bordering* on the dogmatical, but too thorough a lover of human rights ever, I think, to overstep the boundary ; and she is, I think, not conceited — no, not in the least, but quite aware of her own superiority, and perhaps a little too frank on this point. But this may be from a deficiency instead of an excess of vanity.”

More than twenty years ago, Margaret Fuller wrote as follows :

“Another interesting sign of the times is the influence exercised by two women, Miss Martineau and Miss Barrett (Mrs. Browning), from their sick-rooms. The lamp of life which, if it had been fed only by their affections, depending on precarious human relations, would scarce have been able to maintain a feeble glare in the lonely prison, now shines far and wide over the nations, cheering fellow-sufferers and hallowing the joy of the faithful.

“These persons need not health, nor youth, nor the charms of personal presence, to make their thought available. A few more such, and ‘old woman’ shall not be the synonym for imbecility, nor ‘old maid’ a term of contempt.”

An editorial criticism, in the Chicago *Journal*, of the leading female writers of the day, thus makes mention of Harriet Martineau: “Probably no living English writer has been more active or more efficient in moulding British opinion, and certainly none has been more beneficent in lifelong influence. England would be less humane and enlightened than she is to-day, if the brave and wise heart of Harriet Martineau had not for nearly fifty years helped to push forward the good cause of popular progress.”

She has already passed the allotted “threescore years and ten,” and can look back upon a long and well-spent life. For her, death has no terrors. If she has no personal hopes for the future, neither has she any regrets for the past. She, surely, if any

one, has earned the right to "wrap the drapery of her couch about" her, "and lie down to pleasant" *rest*, if not "dreams."

"What an insult it is to our best moral faculties," she says, in one of her letters to Mr. Atkinson, "to hold over us the promises and threats of heaven and hell, as if there were nothing in us higher than *selfish* hope and fear!"

And again: "If we feel a contentment in our own lot. which must be sound because it is derived from no special administration of our own affairs, but from the impartial and necessary operations of Nature, we cannot but feel, for the same reason, a new exhilaration on account of the unborn multitudes who will ages hence enter upon existence on better terms than those on which we hold it. It is a pleasant thing to have a daily purpose of raising and disciplining ourselves, for no end of selfish purchase or ransom, but from the instinctive tendency to mental and moral health."

If any Christian admirers of Miss Martineau find cause of grief in her openly expressed and honestly held opinions on theology, let them comfort themselves with the knowledge that if she has not "loved the Lord," after their fashion, she has done infinitely better, in loving warmly, sincerely, and faithfully, her "fellow-men." Let them also beware, on their own account, lest for lack of her good works it shall be said to them, "Inasmuch as ye did it not to one of the least of *these*, ye did it not to me."

I have not by me a complete list of all Miss Martineau's writings, but the following partial list bears evidence of how industrious a writer she has been, and how varied the themes on which she wrote :

"Devotions for Young People."

"Christmas Day."

"The Friends — A Sequel to Christmas Day."

"Principle and Practice — A Tale."

"The Rioters."

- “Addresses, Prayers and Original Hymns.”  
“Mary Campbell.”  
“The Turnout.”  
“My Servant Rachel.”  
“Sequel to Principle and Practice.”  
“Traditions of Palestine.”  
“The Faith as Unfolded by Many Prophets.”  
“Providence, as Manifested through Israel.”  
“The Essential Faith of the Universal Church.”  
“Four Years of Youth.”  
“Society in America.” 2 vols.  
“Deerbrook.”  
“The Crofton Boys.”  
“The Hour, and the Man.”  
“Life in the Sick-room.”  
“Forest and Game Law Tales.” 3 vols.  
“Feats on the Fiord.”  
“Billow and Rock.”  
“Eastern Life, Past and Present.”  
“History of England, During Thirty Years’ Peace—from 1815 to 1845.” 4 vols.

“Letters on the Laws of Man’s Nature and Development.” (Martineau and Atkinson.)

“Comte’s Positive Philosophy.” (A Translation and Condensation.)

“The Housemaid.”

“The Settlers at Home.”

“The Peasant and the Prince.”

“Health, Husbandry and Handicraft.”

“Guide to the Lakes.”

“Biographical Sketches.” 2 vols.

Besides these, she wrote, from 1831 to 1835, monthly tracts on political economy; in 1839 a series of stories for children entitled “The Playfellow,” and many other stories and newspaper and magazine articles not yet compiled.

FOLLOWING close upon the death of her great cotemporary, George Sand, came the news of the death of Harriet Martineau, at her retreat at Ambleside, in the latter part of June, 1876. As her opinions on theology remained unchanged, her death was consist-

ent with her expressed opinions. By her own urgent request, her funeral was entirely private, and free from any religious ceremonial. Her autobiography was finished and in press before her death, and will soon be given to the public. A singular instance of her firmness of mind is shown in the fact of her having, just previous to her decease, deposited with the *London Daily News* a short biographical and critical sketch of her life and works, written by herself, to be published immediately after that event, of which a writer in the *Spectator* says that it is "so coldly judicial, so severely passionless, so harsh, indeed, in some respects, that had it not been her own work, the editor of the *Daily News* would have been charged with a mocking hardness for giving it publicity so soon after her death."



FRANCES WRIGHT D'ARUSMONT.



## FRANCES WRIGHT D'ARUSMONT.

**A**S pure-hearted and true a philanthropist as any whose name has ever adorned the pages of history, or glorified humanity, was Frances Wright, a woman who independently stepped forth from the quiet of a peaceful, happy life to dare the sneers, reproaches, and calumnies of those for whose advancement and enlightenment she sacrificed wealth, friends, and reputation. Her name should shine on that bright scroll where we have placed the names of a Howard, a Dix, a Fry, and a Nightingale. They gave up everything to minister to the physical needs of their fellow-beings; she sacrificed all to the needs of the mind and heart of humanity.

She came of good stock. The gifted Mrs. Montague was the grand aunt of her mother. Baron Rokeby, Primate of all Ireland, and the most liberal Protestant prelate of that island, was her mother's uncle. General William Campbell, a man deeply versed in the Oriental languages, and the companion of Malcolm in his embassy to Persia, was her mother's brother. James Mylne, Professor of Moral Philosophy in the University of Glasgow, was her father's uncle. Her father, although scarcely twenty-nine years old at his death, had been a correspondent of Adam Smith, Dr. Cullen, and other distinguished men of science and letters both in England and Scotland. He was a member of many literary and scientific associations. The British Museum in London was indebted to his antiquarian researches for donations of rare and valuable coins and medals. He was regarded and consulted as authority in these matters by Dr. Pinkerton, and Mr. Planta, Keeper of the Medals in the British Museum, and others.

He took a lively and deeply sympathetic interest in the great events which agitated Europe during the French Revolution, and was instrumental in spreading through his own neighborhood popular translations of French treatises, political and historical. He circulated also the works of Thomas Paine ; and, having promoted a cheap publication of his "Rights of Man," became, in 1794, an object of Governmental espionage. I mention these facts as tending to throw some light on the pre-natal influences which may have had their effect upon Frances Wright's life and character.

She was born in Miln's Buildings, Nethergate, Dundee, Scotland, on the 6th of September, 1795. By the death of both parents, she, together with an older brother and a younger sister, was left an orphan at the age of two and a half years. The brother, some two years older, was sent to reside with his grand uncle, Professor James Mylne. When only fifteen years old, he started for India as a cadet in the ser-

vice of the East India Company, and was killed on the passage in an encounter with a French vessel. Her sister Camilla, with herself, were placed under the care of a maternal aunt.

In giving an account of the earlier years of her life, I cannot do better than to quote her own words as given in her autobiography, written in 1844 :

“To the circumstances of her early life, to the heart-solitude of orphanship, to the absence of all sympathy with the views and characters of those among whom her childhood was thrown, to the presence of a sister who looked to her for guidance, and leaned upon her for support, Madame D'Arusmont is disposed to attribute the chosen severity of her early studies, and prematurity of her views.”

“Surrounded at all times by rare and extensive libraries, and commanding whatever masters she desired, she applied herself by turns to various branches of science, and to the study of ancient and modern

letters and the arts. She was at an early age surprised at the inability of masters to answer her questions, which usually turned upon the nature, origin, and object of the subject submitted to her attention. Being checked on one occasion by a deep and shrewd mathematician and physician, who observed that her questions were dangerous, she replied, 'Can truth be dangerous?' 'It is thought so,' was the answer. She learned on the occasion two things: the one, that truth had still to be found; the other, that men were afraid of it."

"But the attention of her early years was not altogether confined to the study and speculations of the closet. Her sympathies were powerfully drawn toward the sufferings of humanity, and thus her curiosity was vividly excited to discover their causes. She was, perhaps, fifteen when this question was suggested, to her mind, upon witnessing the painful labor of the aged among the English peasantry, and, again, when she saw that peasantry ejected, under

various pretexts, from the estates of the wealthy proprietors of the soil among whom she moved: 'Has man, then, no home upon the earth, and are age and infirmity entitled to no care or consideration?' Upon one occasion, peculiarly distressing to her feelings, her soliloquy was to the effect that some strange secret, some extraordinary vice, lay at the foundation of the whole of human practice. What! should she devote her whole energies to its discovery? At the close she pronounced to herself a solemn oath to wear ever in her heart the cause of the poor and the helpless, and to aid all that she could in redressing the grievous wrongs which seemed to prevail in society. She not unfrequently recalls the engagement then taken, and feels that she has done her best to fulfil it."

"It was while engrossed, perplexed, and often depressed with silent and unsuccessful efforts to arrive at a satisfactory view of truth in anything, that she first accidentally opened the page of America's national his-

tory, as portrayed by the Italian Bocca. From that moment she woke to a new existence. Life was full of promise; the world a theater of interesting observation and useful exertion. There existed a country consecrated to Freedom, and in which man might awake to the full knowledge and full exercise of his powers."

Henceforth, America became her ideal land, a new Utopia in which all wrong would be righted, and all truth triumphant, and she devoured eagerly everything she could learn of its history, heroes, and institutions. To this land, to her so fair in promise, she embarked in 1818, in pursuance of a long-cherished but secret determination, making all her arrangements in regard to her property, etc., unknown to any relative save the sister who accompanied her, and to whom she was devotedly attached. She remained in the United States two years, studying faithfully the institutions, the laws, and the workings of the avowed principles of the young republic.

In 1820 she returned to England, and soon after published her first book, entitled "Views of Society and Manners in America." This was something new, and met a public need, as was evinced by its rapid sale, while it brought its author for the first time in her life prominently before the public.

Desiring to study the theory of a republican form of government from every possible point of view, she went in the following year to France, where she remained during three years. Although, as a woman, young, handsome, talented, wealthy, and her own mistress, she was exposed to every possible temptation, she yet maintained, even in this mad whirlpool of folly and dissipation, her studious habits, and her unsullied purity of character and principles. "Experience had taught me," she says, "in very childhood, how little was to be learned in drawing-rooms, and inspired me with a disgust for frivolous reading, conversation, and occupation."

Her wealth, family connections, and literary reputation gave her the *entree* to the best society of the gay city. Among others, General Lafayette distinguished by his special and marked friendship this girlish authoress, whose enthusiastic admiration of the new republic was only equaled by his own. Enthusiastic in the cause of republicanism as she was, she yet conducted herself with such rare moderation and good sense as to win and retain the warm friendship of many distinguished French Royalists, whose views upon all topics were diametrically opposed to her own.

It was part of the programme she had marked out for herself in life to make America the chief field of her labors for humanity, and she returned here in 1824. The strange anomaly of negro slavery being advocated, as well as merely allowed, in a country ostensibly sworn to cherish and protect the true liberty of mankind, surprised and shocked this woman, who believed sincerely that "*all* men are born free and

equal, with certain inalienable rights, among which are life, *liberty*, and the pursuit of happiness." With her usual energy and desire to reduce theory to practice, she resolved on making an experiment which should demonstrate the superiority of free to slave labor, and test the capability of the negro, when properly educated, for self-dependence. She purchased 2,000 acres of land in Tennessee, together with several families of negroes, and for several years, in company with her sister and Mr. Whitby, her sister's husband, devoted herself to educating them for freedom. She was too ardent and impetuous, however; she feared neither hardship nor danger in her self-imposed tasks. R. D. Owen, who was one of ten trustees of her property at Nashoba, says she rashly exposed herself to the hot, broiling sun in July and August weather, riding long distances on horseback, and sometimes sleeping all night in the forest, when it was more convenient to do so. These imprudences, and her own eagerness

to accomplish her end, injured her health so that she was obliged to return to England to recruit.

She revisited America in 1827, at which time she was accompanied by a friend in every way her opposite, save in her love for literature; that friend was Mrs. Trollope, whose book, "Manners of the Americans," written on her return to England, is not yet forgotten, nor quite forgiven. In that book mention is made of her visit to Frances Wright's plantation. She says:

"Miss Wright was the companion of our voyage from England, and it was my purpose to have passed some months with her and her sister at the estate purchased by them in Tennessee.

"This lady was at this time dedicated to a pursuit widely different from her subsequent occupation. She was about to seclude herself for life in the deepest forests of the New World, and devote her time, talents, and fortune to aid the cause of suffering African slaves."

Mrs. Trollope stayed only ten days at Nashoba (the name of Miss Wright's place then). Possessing none of that true, daring heroism of character which distinguished her friend, and enabled her to rise superior to the petty discomforts of her chosen life, she left, disgusted and homesick, because she found none of the luxuries to which she had been accustomed, nor any society in which to shine as the "bright particular star." Of her stay there she wrote as follows: "Desolate was the only word, the only feeling that presented itself. I think Miss Wright was aware of the painful impression the sight of her forest home produced on me, and I doubt not that the conviction reached us both at the same moment that we had erred in thinking that a few months passed together at this spot could be productive of pleasure to either. But to do her justice, I believe her mind was so exclusively occupied by the object she had in view, that all things else were worthless or indifferent to her. I never

heard or read of any enthusiasm approaching hers, except in some few instances, in ages past, of religious fanaticism. The only white persons we found at Nashoba, besides Miss Wright, were her sister, Mrs. Whitby, and that sister's husband. There were thirty or forty slaves there, but no schools yet established, although books and other materials were collected, and two teachers engaged."

But in spite of Frances Wright's devotion and perseverance, her Nashoba experiment proved a failure, from causes beyond her control, and we find her, one year later, giving her slaves their freedom, sending them by safe hands to Hayti, where they were placed under the protection of the President, while her thoughtful liberality provided each one a small capital with which to begin a life of freedom.

She had previous to this several times visited Mr. Owen's colony at New Harmony, Indiana, with a view to gain hints and ideas by which to guide her own little

colony. She had thus become acquainted with the spirit and design of the New Harmony colonists, and so, when reluctantly compelled to give up her pet project, she gladly hastened, at the suggestion of the elder Owen, to take editorial charge of the *New Harmony Gazette*, changed afterward to the *Free Enquirer*.

She had been for years a Freethinker. To a mind constituted like hers, which sought only for truth and freedom, at whatever cost, and which acknowledged no fealty to the dead past, such a result was inevitable. That fragment of the thoughts of her earlier years, "A Few Days in Athens," composed in great part during her nineteenth year, gives abundant evidence of the daring views she held on religious matters, even when but a girl in years. These views had "grown with her growth, and strengthened with her strength"; and so loyal was she to her anti-theologic convictions, that for the sake of the truths she held so dear, when she saw what she considered a pre-

concerted attack upon them, she did a daring thing for a woman in those days to do: She decided on taking the platform to defend those truths, and, in so far as she might, to counteract the threatened attack on Freethought. "It was in 1828," she says in her autobiography, "that the standard of the Christian party in politics was openly unfurled. Of this party, which had been long secretly at work, Frances Wright had previously detected the maneuvers, in all sections of the country. This was an evident attempt, through the influence of the clergy over the female mind, to effect a union of Church and State, and with it a lasting union of Bank and State, and thus effectually to prostrate the independence of the people and the institutions of the country. Clearly distinguishing the nature of the move, she determined to arouse the whole American people to meet it at whatever cost to herself."

She delivered her first lecture in Cincinnati, then made a tour as far west as

St. Louis, lecturing at all the principal towns and cities. From St. Louis, she returned eastward to Baltimore and New York. Her advent as a lecturer created quite a *furor*. She was often bitterly opposed, and met with many difficulties, but, with indomitable energy and perseverance, she conquered them all. Mrs. Trollope attended one of her first lectures in Cincinnati, and speaks thus of the sensation her appearance on the platform created: "That a lady of fortune, family, and education, whose youth had been passed in the most refined circles of private life, should present herself as a public lecturer, would naturally create surprise anywhere. But in America, where women are guarded by a sevenfold shield of habitual insignificance, it caused an effect that can hardly be described. I shared the surprise, but not the wonder. I knew her extraordinary gift of eloquence, her almost unequalled command of words, and the wonderful power of her rich and thrilling voice. My expectations fell short of the splendor,

the brilliancy, the eloquence, of this extraordinary orator. It is impossible to imagine anything more striking than her appearance. The tall, majestic form ; the deep, almost solemn expression of her eyes ; the shapely contour of the finely formed head, unadorned excepting by its own natural ringlets ; her garment of plain white muslin, which hung in folds that recalled the drapery of a Grecian statue—all contributed to produce an effect unlike anything I had ever seen before, or ever expect to see again."

Colonel John W. Forney, in his "Recollections," says : "Writing about public men, I am not willing to exclude myself from the opportunity of saying something about the celebrated women who have figured in American history. Prominent among my own recollections, was the versatile and original Frances Wright. She excited much comment by her leveling doctrines and extravagant language. I shall always remember the effect produced by the lectures of this indefatigable and really gifted woman as

she traveled through Pennsylvania many years ago. Controverted and attacked by the clergy and the press, she maintained an undaunted front, and persevered to the last. That she was a woman of great mind is established by the number of her followers, including some of the best intellects of the country, and by the repeated publication and very general reading of her tracts and essays."

Elizabeth Oakes Smith, in an article published in the *Revolution* in 1868, speaks of her thus: "I arrived in the city of New York near the close of the year 1839, and the great topic of conversation was this remarkable woman, who was most certainly the pioneer woman in the field of the lecture-room."

"Fanny Wright was most grievously aspersed on every side, and she must have felt to the core her innate worthiness, to bear it as she did. They said she was an "Infidel," using the word precisely as a Turk might have applied it to a Christian,

omitting the expletive "dog." This was made the basis of the hue and cry against her, though the true meaning of it was, that simple-minded men were scared out of their wits lest their wives should learn from her example something that would induce them to question masculine supremacy. It was a cold winter's night when I prevailed upon my honored husband to go with me and hear the famous woman. There might have been fifty persons—not more—present, and these began to shuffle and call for the speaker. It was all so much more gross and noisy than anything I had ever encountered where a woman was concerned, that I grew quite distressed. At length, the door in the rear of the desk opened, and a neat foot was placed upon the platform. She was a full-sized woman, with well-developed muscle, and handsomely shaped, dressed in black silk, with plain linen collar and cuffs; her head was large, but not handsome, comparatively low, but broad, indicating force and executive ability.

She wore her hair short, waving slightly. Her features were all good, and the smile sweet, with a touch of feminine sadness; eyes well set under the broad brows. She was pale, but not sallow, and there was an earnestness and wholesomeness about Fanny Wright that made their way to the mind and heart. The lecture was entirely political, and very democratic. She was at intervals applauded, but did not seem to expect or care for it. Her self-poise was very fine. She was at home on her subject, and did not beat the air with vain efforts to say what was but half-digested in her own mind."

Mrs. Trollope heard her lecture in Philadelphia in 1830, when she was accompanied on to the platform of the Arch-street Theater by a body-guard of Quaker ladies dressed in the peculiar costume of that sect. Her strong anti-slavery proclivities and labors, doubtless, won for her this singular honor.

From 1828 until 1838, her record is one of unceasing arduous public work. Even

while absent on her lecturing tours, she constantly forwarded spicy, thoughtful, editorial articles for her paper, the *New Harmony Gazette*. Robert Dale Owen was her faithful coadjutor in editing this and other papers. These two were co-laborers for years, first on the *New Harmony Gazette*, then on the *Free Enquirer*, published at first in New Harmony, afterward in New York city, and Colonel Forney says: "She was also the author, in company with Robert Dale Owen, of certain popular tracts." John Humphrey Noyes, in his "History of American Socialisms," calls her "the spiritual helpmate and better half of Owen," and adds: "Our impression is that not only was she the leading woman of the communistic movement of that period, but that she had a very important agency in starting two other movements, which have had far greater success, and are at this moment strong in public favor — viz., Anti-Slavery and Woman's Rights. She was, indeed, the pioneer of the strong-minded women."

On her first lecturing tour, her lectures were mainly of an anti-religious character, and to this fact is probably due much of the opposition she received at that time. When afterward she lectured on political subjects, she met with a somewhat better reception.

When not in the lecturing field she kept her pen constantly busy. I am not sure that I have anything like a complete list of her literary labors, but I may mention as among them, besides the editing of the *Free Enquirer*, the conducting of a political magazine, *The Manual of American Principles*. She was at one time the assistant of Abner Kneeland on the Boston *Investigator*, and besides a large volume of her published lectures she has written and published at various times the following works:

“Views of Society and Manners in America.”

“A Few Days in Athens.”

“Altorf.” (A tragedy, which appeared on the stage, James Wallack enacting the principal part.)

“England the Civilizer.” (Published in 1847.)

In 1831, the sister who had so long been her companion died in Paris, and she was left bereft of all near family ties. It was seven years later that she took what seems to have proved a most disastrous step for her happiness, in marrying her old-time friend, M. Phiquepal D'Arusmont, whose acquaintance she first formed at New Harmony, where he was a teacher of some new system of education, and of whom in her fragmentary autobiography she speaks in the most enthusiastic and laudatory manner. How long they lived happily together I do not know, but they did so at least until 1844, when that autobiography was first written, and published in the Dundee *Northern Star*. She was then on a visit to Scotland for the purpose of settling the accounts of some property to which she had fallen heir by the death of a cousin of her father. I think that they must have separated soon after their return to America from that

visit. Elizabeth Oakes Smith says: "Her husband certainly treated her in a most ungenerous and unmanly way, and I fear her daughter was not without blame. I had these particulars from a highly reliable source, namely, *her lawyer*. M. D'Arusmont had been penniless but for her, and he meanly endeavored to wrest her property from her, under the statutes that make a woman's person, goods, and chattels all pass to the ownership of the man who marries her. Madame D'Arusmont desired to educate her daughter for a public speaker; and to prevent this, asserting that the girl was disinclined thereto, he took her away from her mother till she, the mother, died. It is most likely that the young lady inherited neither the talents nor aspirations of her nobly-endowed mother, and was deficient, perhaps, in the more tender emotions, as we do not hear of her making any effort to see, or minister to the comfort of, the being to whom she owed life, property, and fame."

Of a fall on the ice, Mrs. Smith relates

this incident: "There was one curious coincidence that occurred shortly before her death, which would do the heart of an astrologer good, as going to show, 'There is a Divinity that shapes our ends, rough hew them how we may,' and that certain persons are brought into juxtaposition by an irresistible destiny. Madame D'Arusmont was walking through one of the streets of Cincinnati when a slight layer of ice rendered the footing precarious. It afterward appeared that M. D'Arusmont was also at the same moment making his way through a parallel street, and on a line with herself. Both fell at the same moment—she broke her thigh, and he broke his wrist."

In "Half-hours with Freethinkers" I find this succinct account of her death:

"Madame D'Arusmont died suddenly in Cincinnati, on Tuesday, December 14, 1852. She had been for some time unwell, in consequence of a fall upon the ice, the previous winter, which broke her thigh, and probably hastened her decease, but the im-

mediate cause of her death was the rupture of a blood-vessel. She was aware of her situation, knew when she was dying, and met her last hour with perfect composure."

She was buried in the Cincinnati Spring Grove Cemetery, said to be the finest west of the Alleghanies. Over her remains an elegant marble monument has been erected, and, it is said, at the expense of her daughter, Frances Sylvia D'Arusmont. A *bas-relief* portrait of Frances Wright ornaments it, and it bears the following inscription :

“FRANCES WRIGHT,

Born in

Dundee, Scotland, Sept. 1795.

Passed to

Spirit life from Cincinnati, Dec. 1852.

“I have wedded the cause of human improvement ; staked on it my fortune, my reputation, and my life.

“Human kind is but one family ; the education of its youth should be equal and universal.”

Fitting words these to be placed on the monument of their author—words which she enforced by a life in unison with them.

She experienced the fate of all reformers, in that after she had given all that was best of herself, her time, her talents, her wealth, her toil, to the interests of mankind, she was at the last neglected as she had been previously calumniated. Time, the Restorer, as well as the Destroyer, will give to her, as to so many others like her, the glory which is rightfully her due, for—

—“Truth shall conquer at the last,  
As round and round we run;  
And ever the right comes uppermost,  
And ever is justice done.”

Although it must be confessed that too often, as in Frances Wright's case, “justice is done” too late to avail aught but to vindicate the memory of the wronged one.

That the storms and tempests of the life she voluntarily took upon herself left their impress upon her, we know. One who held

in his possession two portraits of Frances Wright, one taken when she was about twenty, and the other taken toward the close of her life, writes thus of the difference between the two pictures :

“The young face is oval-shaped ; graceful curls shade the forehead and neck ; the eyes are soft ; and the mouth and chin feminine. The second face bears a resemblance to the first, but it is the resemblance of a father to his daughter. She wears no cap ; her hair still curls, but it is short, and does not cover the frowning wisdom of her large forehead. The lower part of her face is broad and firm, and all the expression is that of a woman of stern experience. Well, there is history written in that face. She was the rough pioneer of the Woman’s Rights reform, that is so respected and so well supported at present. Never woman had to brazen herself as she did to initiate that movement. If there is any good in that movement, the world owes something to the courage of Frances Wright.”

That she had her faults no one who understands human nature can doubt. Great public virtues have sometimes been allied to great private vices. Of Frances Wright's private life I know nothing. I judge her only by her public acts. Those were noble, brave, and philanthropic. With no private wrongs to right, nor personal injustice to defeat, she, with rare courage, took up the cause of a common humanity, and proved true at least a part of Mrs. Browning's couplet :

“The world's male chivalry has perished out,  
But women are knights-errant to the last.”

She had wealth, leisure, friends, character : these she offered up a willing sacrifice to the interests of humanity. There stand the records ; there is no gainsaying, no denying them. Nor will the idea of overweening vanity, or desire for popularity, cancel any part of her just praise. Had that been her aim, she took a strange and devious course to gain it. Nay, further, her

own eloquent words carry conviction of her heartfelt earnestness. I believe in Frances Wright, as a true, self-sacrificing soul, of whom the Freethinkers of all countries should be proud.

EMMA MARTIN.



## EMMA MARTIN.

I THINK the name of Emma Martin deserves mention in these sketches, although the little I have learned of her life-history has been from the perusal of "Half-hours with Freethinkers"; but her writings show vigor and breadth of mind, while personally she seems to have made a decided impression upon all those with whom she was brought in contact, as a refined and beautiful woman, and deep thinker.

In his sketch of the English Communists, Moncure D. Conway says briefly that "Harmony Hall had, like 'Brook Farm,' many interesting women in it. . . . Mrs. Emma Martin was both beautiful and eloquent."

The writer of the biographical sketch in "Half-hours with Freethinkers" says :

"Mrs. Martin was born at Bristol in 1812. She was brought up under strict religious training. She early evinced fine powers, with all the enthusiasm and emotional nature which frequently culminates in ardent religious feeling, but, fortunately, with a natural receptivity to truth, a spirit of inquiry, a love of mankind, and a horror of inhumanity, which neutralized the ardor of her unthinking affections and her imagination."

She early showed evidences of genius, and a taste for literature. When only twenty-four, she edited for some time a paper entitled the *Bristol Magazine*. She was a ready, facile writer, with a fine, discriminating mind. Her attention was early directed to religion, which for a person of her temperament had peculiar attractions, and it was not until several years after her marriage that, having, after careful investigation, found, as she judged, good reason

to doubt the dogmas taught by the Church, she declared herself a Freethinker, and an Infidel. She had been an earnest, conscientious Christian, and when she changed her views she was still as earnest and conscientious, and courageously avowed those changed views, openly and decidedly, by both tongue and pen.

Woman's rights and privileges, and her proper place in the society of which she constitutes so important a part, had awakened her attention, and enlisted her sympathies, long before her religious doubts were aroused. She was married young, and her marriage had proved ill-assorted and unhappy. Doubtless her own sufferings and perplexities led to her inquiries and researches into the wrongs of her sex as a class. Finding for herself no redress or mode of escape, under the law, from the tyranny and ill-usage of a brutal husband, she dared to take the law into her own hands, and separated from him; taking upon herself the care and education of her chil-

dren, to whom she ever proved a faithful and tender mother.

“Our first knowledge of Mrs. Martin,” says George Jacob Holyoake, “was as an opponent of Socialism. But as soon as she saw intellectual truth in it she paused in her opposition. Long and serious was the conflict the change in her convictions caused her; but her natural love of truth prevailed, and she came over to the advocacy of that she had so resolutely and ably assailed. And none who ever offered us alliance rendered us greater service, or did it at greater cost. Beautiful in expression, quick in wit, strong in will, eloquent in speech, coherent in conviction, and of a stainless character, she was incomparable among public women. She was one of the few among the early advocates of English Socialism who saw that the combat against religion could not be confined to an attack on forms of faith—to a mere comparison of creeds—and she attached only a secondary importance to the abuses of Christianity,

when she saw that the whole was an abuse of history, reason, and morality."

That Mrs. Martin fully understood the import of the bold step she had taken, in thus fearlessly avowing her unpopular but earnest convictions, may be seen from the following part of her reply to a clerical friend who had sent her a religious tract, entitled "The Sinner's Friend," as an earnest of his interest in her spiritual welfare :

"I have, sir, children whose happiness is dearer to me than my own, for they have, I hope, a longer term of existence before them than I can look for ; the possession, therefore, of principles which, if they are false, would be so detrimental to their interests, must have been to me a matter of deep solicitude, not only because they must necessarily share in any odium which attaches to the name of their mother, but also because their education must be erroneous, and eternal happiness be risked by unbelief. Allow me, then, to ask you whether I, who became an Infidel after twelve years of

study and practice of Christian principles; after seriously investigating the internal and external evidences of Christianity; after searching, as I have done, into the origin and principles of all religions; after making public profession of my disbelief, having so important a thing at stake as the welfare and happiness of my children—think you, sir, that ‘The Sinner’s Friend’ can overthrow the reasoning of years, or present stronger motives to my mind than those which now sway it? You cannot think so.

“You will now know that neither declamations, nor promises, nor threats, can have any influence over a mind which has been long regardless of either — a mind which considers one fact as of more value than a thousand brilliant sentences; one proof as more conclusive than a volume of hopes and fears.”

Mrs. Martin, in addition to her literary pursuits, found time to qualify herself to become a physician for women; and as she believed in doing everything she un-

dertook in a thorough and efficient manner, she attended, for this purpose, long courses of lectures on subjects pertinent to the health and organization of woman, and studied and practiced for months in hospitals, in order to fit herself properly.

As a lecturer, Mrs. Martin was eloquent, logical, and attractive. While her talent as a writer, though not of the highest order, was yet far above average; her style was readable and interesting, and her powers varied.

She did not live to reach her fortieth year, consumption claiming her as one of its myriad victims, just as she was beginning to develop the full strength of her intellect, and to realize the full value of life. She died in October, 1851, at her home at Finchley Common, consistent in her opinions, and persistent in her views to the last moment of her life; passing away calmly, undismayed by any superstitious fears, conscious of that integrity of soul and clearness of conscience which proves ever an

armor of defense in every supreme hour of life. Desirous of life for the sake of her children as much as for her own pleasure, she yet acknowledged and yielded to the power of the inevitable with the submissive grace of a philosopher.

The funeral services were conducted on strictly rationalistic principles, in accordance with her own express desire, her personal friend and admirer, George Jacob Holyoake, making the address, and speaking to the friends present in behalf of the deceased. During that address he paid the following tribute to her character :

“As a worker for human improvement, Mrs. Martin was as indefatigable as efficient. From the time when she published ‘The Exiles of Piedmont,’ to the issue of her essay on ‘God’s Gifts, and Men’s Duties,’ and later still, she wrote with ardor, always manifesting force of personal thought, and, what is more unusual in the writings of women, strength and brevity of expression. Her lectures were always distinguished by

the instruction they conveyed, and the earnestness with which they were delivered; and in courage of advocacy and thoroughness of view, no woman, except Frances Wright, is to be compared with her, and only one, Harriet Martineau (greater, indeed, in order of power), resembles Mrs. Martin in largeness and sameness of speculation, and her capacity to treat purely social questions, and those relating to woman. She had an affectionate nature, which astonished those who knew her in private, as much as her resolution astonished those who knew her in public. Indeed, she was the most womanly woman of all the public advocates of Woman's Rights."



MARGARET R. CHAPPELLSMITH.



MARGARET REYNOLDS CHAP-  
PELLSMITH.

I REGRET that my information in regard to the career of Mrs. Chappellsmith is so limited that I shall not be able to make this sketch as interesting to those who would like to know all about her as I could wish.

But she has for so many years, most of her lifetime in fact, been so thoroughly and enthusiastically identified with the cause of Freethought, both in this country and in her native England, that I could not in justice omit her name from these sketches; and so I give to the reader the fragments which I have gleaned concerning her life.

It is years since her articles on Co-operation and other reform subjects, pub-

lished in the Boston *Investigator*, and written in a strong, sensible, almost masculine style, first attracted my attention, and made me desirous of knowing more concerning her. What little I do know of her I learned from a letter written by her, at a time when she was very busy, in reply to my letter of inquiry as to the past of her life. In that letter is intimated her intention of writing her own reminiscences at some future date, so that if I fail, from meagerness of material, of doing her justice in this slight and incomplete sketch (which I intend only as a recognition of her services), her own more full relation will supply all deficiencies in this.

Mrs. Chappellsmith, whose maiden name was Margaret Reynolds, was the daughter of a master mechanic who owned a shop and hired workmen. Her life had probably had some hard experiences in regard to the disparity between man and man, between rich and poor, between capital and labor. Hurt and puzzled by these

evils of society which she saw everywhere around her, she began early to ponder over, and to endeavor to study out, the why and wherefore of this disparity: a great and yet unsolved problem. She began also to devise what to her seemed feasible and effective means of counterbalancing or abolishing many of the evils that go to make the poor man's lot so hard.

In her earnest enthusiasm, her deep-felt concern, in these things, she could not long forbear speaking of them to others, and urging upon them some sort of action, to help themselves into a better mode of life, and to keep their descendants from sinking still deeper into degradation and poverty. She talked a great deal of what was uppermost in her mind to her father's customers and to his workmen, and thus in individual cases did already arouse attention and interest.

At first her girlish enthusiasm and eagerness on these subjects, generally considered so foreign to her sex, awakened only curi-

osity and smiling surprise at the hold which they had gained on her mind. But presently, as they found how strongly she had fortified herself with pertinent illustrations and arguments, how earnestly and convincingly she spoke, and began to reflect for themselves upon how much truth there was in what she said, they began to desire that others might hear this young apostle of reform, and so become also awakened to the welfare of themselves, and, through themselves, of the human race.

She at length determined to act upon these suggestions. Her heart being in her work, as soon as she could form her ideas into connected shape as a series of lectures, she started upon her mission of enlightenment and awakening; and these lectures she delivered for a number of years in various parts of England, under the auspices of Liberal and Freethinking societies.

Moncure D. Conway mentions that she was the first female lecturer of the English

Communists established by Robert Owen and others, in Broughton, a little village twenty miles north of the New Forest. Of this Community, which Margaret Reynolds joined, and where she became personally acquainted with many of the leading English Free-thinkers, Conway remarks as follows:

“The English Communists, the first considerable body in England who ever professed Materialism, and the only party, perhaps, that never possessed it, made their first practical settlement in Hampshire, at a time when society was hard and cold, taxation heavy, the people ignorant, and workingmen homeless. Robert Owen—the first to bring a breath of courage upon those evil days with which the present generation opened—and his disciples set up a propagandism, and subscribed money to create that situation in which it should be impossible for men to be depraved or poor. Looking around on the besotted and criminal, Owen said, ‘Give me a tiger and I will educate it!’ In that faith he called around

him the most earnest men of his time, for the effort which represented more high sentiment and spiritual hope than any movement England has seen. . . . The Millennium had not arrived in 1844, and the well-meaning who were ignorant, and the well-informed who were visionary—those who worked and never rested, and those who rested and never worked—crept in. . . . Thus Harmony Hall (the name of the Community at Broughton) came to know discord, and after a few years of struggle came to an end, by a complication of disorders such as are too familiar in such experiments to require mention in detail.”

Since Mrs. Chappellsmith knew for what purpose I solicited information in regard to her life, I do not think that it will be out of place to quote directly from her own interesting letter.

“I lectured in many parts of London and its environs, in the chief cities in the midland and northern parts of England, and in Scotland, in the neighboring manu-

facturing districts, and in other places. My lectures were on—

“‘Competition and Co-operation.’

“‘The Formation of Character.’

“‘Education of Women.’

“‘The Commercial Condition and Prospects of England.’

“‘Money—and the Evils of Paper Money in Competitive Society.’

“‘Owen at New Lanark.’

“‘Four lectures ‘On the Character, Political Principles, and Writings, of William Cobbett.’

“‘My Reasons why I, having been a Calvinist, have Become an Infidel.’

“‘The Character of the Priesthood as Given by Themselves.’

“‘Five lectures ‘On the Protestant Reformation.’

“‘Marriage, and the Propriety of Divorce when the Marriage is Productive of Misery.’

“‘In this last-mentioned lecture I urged that a state of society be instituted in which

youth and maiden should be better educated than they now are, so that both may better understand themselves and what is requisite to their happiness in their intended partners in marriage; in which they should be educated for marriage, and have more direct moral education than they now have; in which they should be taught that the one enduring, wisely and virtuously formed marriage would produce the greatest amount of happiness that could arise from any union of man and woman; and in which the young people, being brought up together as members of one family, would have sufficient opportunity of knowing each other's characters before marriage.

“I lectured on some other subjects, but in all I showed the evils of the existing state of society, and endeavored to create a public feeling in favor of Co-operation and Communism. I frequently took part in public discussions on religion, taking the Infidel side; and spoke at public meetings against Freetrade lecturers, showing that Freetrade

would not, as these lecturers said, remove or mitigate the misery that always abounds in rich England.

“I am not, and never was, fond of a public life; I yielded to the request of friends, who said that I ought to say to the public what I was in the habit of saying in my father's shop. William Cobbett's intimate friends requested me, and Robert Owen urged me, to lecture; and after I commenced, invitation after invitation came, and so I went on; but at last my husband and myself commenced bookselling, and soon I was compelled to decline all other invitations to lecture.”

We are not told when or why the Chappellsmiths came to America, nor whether they have ever lived anywhere in the New World save in Indiana; but we can guess that after the breaking up of “the English Brook Farm,” as Conway appropriately names the community at Broughton, these enthusiastic believers in a possible and successful Socialism would naturally look

to the younger, freer country as the proper field for its realization ; and, fresh from association with Owen and with Harmony Hall, what place would be so likely to attract them as Owen's New-World experiment with human nature—New Harmony, Indiana? There, for many years, Mr. and Mrs. Chappellsmith have made their home, and there they still continue to reside.

Both still find time to write on those topics of most engrossing interest to them, and to which they have devoted the greater part and the best energies of their lives—Freethought and Labor-reform.

Mrs. Chappellsmith is now publishing a series of papers on "The Historic Value of the Gospels"—papers which indicate great research and patient study, and which will, if issued in book form, be extremely valuable for reference and authority on that subject.

ERNESTINE L. ROSE.



## ERNESTINE L. ROSE.

ON Thursday, the 14th of May, 1868, I attended the second anniversary of the American Equal Rights Association, held in the large hall of Cooper Institute. I attended the morning session alone, and so had to depend upon myself for the impressions received regarding the different speakers. Addresses were made by the President, Mrs. Stanton; by Miss Anthony, Lucy Stone, Colonel Higginson, Frederick Douglass, Henry Blackwell, Reverend Olympia Brown, Reverend Henry Blanchard, and others. Among the (to me) unknown "others" was an elderly lady, whom I understood Mrs. Stanton to introduce as "Mrs. Roe, of Ohio."

“Well, and how did you like the meeting, and who, among the speakers, pleased you best?” queried a friend, whom temporary illness had detained at home—a friend who knew all the notables by sight as well as by reputation.

“Oh, I was very much surprised by some, and disappointed by others,” was my reply. “I find that it is not always those who have the highest reputation who are the best speakers. As, for instance, this morning, by far the best speaker among the ladies was one whose name I never recollect having heard before in connection with this movement—a Mrs. Roe, of Ohio, a woman of fifty, with a slight lisp, and foreign accent, yet possessing all the fire and eloquence of youth. She was radical, sensible, forceful, and earnest. I hope that she will speak again this evening!”

“I hope so, too,” rejoined my friend, smiling at my enthusiasm over the unknown.

My friend accompanied me to the evening session, and before the speaking com-

menced pointed out to me the celebrities on the platform. Presently, as a lady entered, his eye brightened with sudden interest. "Look there!" he said, "at that lady just come in—that is Ernestine Rose, of the *Investigator*—you remember her articles?" I followed his glance, then turned to him in astonishment: "*That* Mrs. Rose!" I exclaimed; "why, that is my eloquent unknown—Mrs. Roe, of Ohio!"

I do not yet understand how I came to make the mistake as to her identity, but I was very glad that it had been made, as I had thus an opportunity to receive my impressions of her apart from my prejudices. And my first favorable impressions were deepened on hearing her speak again that evening, and on the following day, at the anniversary of the Universal Peace Society at Dodworth Hall.

Mrs. Rose was at that time apparently about fifty years of age, of medium height, of fine, matronly form, and thoroughly feminine in appearance—much more so than she

appears in the only picture I have ever seen of her — a picture taken some years before I had ever seen her. Soft curls, iron-gray in color, drooped over the fair, pale cheeks, seeming to subdue by their shadow the flashing light of her beautiful eyes, and to soften the severity of the broad white brow. The face was sweet, calm, and queenlike, expressive of intelligence, dignity, and tenderness — the ideal type of the face of intellectual womanhood. In speaking, all the force and fire of her enthusiastic nature seemed to flash up from the still depths of her mind, and so electrified her hearers as to make them forget the slight lisp in her speech, and the foreign accent and pronunciation, or to remember them only as additional charms. No young girl in all the tender grace which youth and Nature give, or tricked out in all the dainty adornment which art bestows, was ever more lovely in my eyes than Mrs. Rose, in the beautiful ripeness of life's autumn.

When the book entitled "Eminent Women of the Age" appeared, in 1870, knowing, as I did, what services for liberty of all kinds Mrs. Rose had performed, I turned over page after page of that book, confidently expecting to find her name given the honorable mention it deserved. But I turned over the leaves in vain. She was, doubtless, too radical for any of those who contributed to that volume to venture to seem to countenance. But I have no doubt that another book of the same kind, compiled within the next ten years, will not be likely to make the same omission.

Mrs. Rose has been an earnest and indefatigable worker in behalf of all reforms for the greater part of her lifetime. She was born in Peterkoff Tribunalski, in Poland, on the 13th of January, 1810. Her full name, as given by her parents, was Ernestine Louise Susmond Polowsky. Her father was a learned Jewish Rabbi, and she was brought up and educated in strict ac-

cordance with the tenets of that faith. She grew up beautiful and studious, and no pains were spared to make her education thorough, and such as befitted the daughter of a learned leader in Israel.

But Ernestine's was an independent and thoughtful, as well as enthusiastic nature. She early gave evidence of rebellious criticism of the creed she had been taught to believe in as the true faith, and showed herself a worthy daughter of a scholar and thinker by plying her father with questions, which, as a teacher of the faith, he was bound to make clear to those who sought light of him, as did his daughter Ernestine. But her searching questions only troubled and annoyed him, while his answers failed to satisfy her in any degree. "A young girl," he said to her, "does not want to understand the object of her creed, but to accept and believe it."

But doubt once awakened, and without any reasonable evidence to silence and put it to rest, still continued its work in the

young girl's mind, while the honesty of her nature was such that she could not make a profession of faith which she had not ; and open confession of her disbelief brought her soon into unpleasant relations with her father, who was sorely exercised by this apostasy on the part of one of his own flesh and blood.

Her mother had died when she was a child, and therefore the whole care of her education and teaching rested upon her father. He was at a loss how to manage this strange young girl, who had developed such an inconvenient way of thinking for herself. With masculine sagacity he be-thought him of a sure method of silencing the doubts and queries of girlhood. He would give her in marriage to one of his own faith. With the new duties and womanly aims inspired by marriage, she would no longer have time to devote to religious speculations. Without her consent or desire, he, in virtue of his power as father and spiritual teacher, betrothed her to a young

friend who professed to love her, although she was still too young for marriage, even if she had found a congenial mate.

When Ernestine was informed of this step she was in despair. Her independent spirit revolted at this wicked exercise of parental authority. She was only sixteen, but already old enough to realize what a terrible thing marriage without love could be. She was at a loss what to do, but fully determined that nothing should force her into so hateful a contract.

She determined first to appeal to the generosity of her would-be lover. She went to him, and stated the plain truth of the matter; told him she did not, and could not, love him, and begged him to release her, and to say to her father that he would by no means wed an unwilling bride. But he laughed in her face, and reminded her of the fact that by the terms of their betrothal she would forfeit a good share of the property which reverted to her from her dead mother, if the contract was broken by her;

for himself, *he* meant to prove faithful to the engagement.

Filled with anger and resentment at this refusal, Ernestine was all the more determined that she never would marry this man. She could still appeal to the law; but to the place where the case must be adjudged was a long and lonely journey, and it was in the depth of winter. Ernestine dared the journey, presented her petition, plead her own cause, and, to her happiness, won it, and went home to declare her triumph and freedom.

She had been detained somewhat longer than she expected to be on this journey, and on her return found that her father had solaced himself in his loneliness during her absence by taking to himself a wife, a young girl not much older than Ernestine. It may be that his own matrimonial designs had first suggested marriage as a suitable cure for the obstinacy of his daughter.

Ernestine soon found that she could not harmonize perfectly with her young step-

mother, and home became distasteful and unpleasant to her. She longed also for a wider field of action. She had youth, good health, and abundance of energetic daring. She determined to seek her fortune in the great world. So at seventeen we find her established in the city of Berlin, Prussia, living economically on the little capital she had brought with her, and adding to it by the sale of a perfumed paper, of which she was the inventor. She remained in Berlin for nearly two years.

In June, 1829, she embarked for England, being desirous of seeing as much of the world as possible. But this venture came near being her last, as the ship in which she set sail was wrecked, and she arrived in England nearly destitute of everything save her strength, health, energy, and education. All these stood her in good stead in this emergency. She immediately sought employment as a teacher of languages in London, adding to her income from this labor by the sale of her perfumed

paper. It was not long, either, before she found friends, even in the great London, who were as radical and liberty-loving as herself. Of her first introduction to the public as a speaker, Moncure D. Conway writes as follows, in a letter to the Cincinnati *Commercial* :

“In the old days when Robert Owen was filling all England with his socialistic ideas, and had built here in London a huge forum of Radicalism, almost as big as the Crystal Palace, a young and remarkably beautiful girl, just from Poland, was introduced to him. Discovering that she was a precocious Radical, and possessed of considerable ability, he invited her to speak in his huge hall, on an occasion when several thousands of people had gathered there. Notwithstanding her slight knowledge of the English language, the good looks and the enthusiasm of the girl made a good impression on the audience. She was thenceforth encouraged to appear in public again and again.”

According to her biographer, Mrs. Jenny P. D'Hericourt, it was during her residence in London that she became acquainted with Mr. Rose, an Englishman of broad, liberal views. They were married in due form, but by a civil magistrate, as neither of them had any faith in creeds or priests, and considered marriage to be a civil contract, founded on mutual esteem and love, rather than a religious ceremony.

In May, 1836, they left England for America, the land which has ever had a magnetic attraction for all lovers of liberty. Here she at first, and for many years, devoted herself to lecturing on those subjects which most interested her. She did not do this to the neglect of her home duties, but only as she found the time to spare from her household and maternal cares, Mr. Rose aiding and encouraging her by every means in his power.

There can be little doubt that if Mrs. Rose had been less true to herself than she has always been ; if she had been content to

conceal from the public her real views; in a word, if she had been less honest and conscientious—she would to-day occupy a far higher position in public favor than she does. Her name, in that case, would not have been omitted in the list of those “eminent women” who have distinguished themselves on the lecture platform, in their chivalric crusade against all forms of slavery; nor would she be assigned a second or third-rate place in public meetings devoted to the objects to which she has for long years given her time, her labor, her money, and her best energies. But her strong, fine nature would need to be dwarfed and circumscribed of its present symmetrical fullness to allow her to become coward enough to deny her honest, earnest convictions in regard to theological matters. And the day is not so far off as many imagine when she will be given full credit for the noble courage and purity of purpose which forced her to declare herself an Atheist, in days when that word was a

bugbear to all religious people. The day has already gone by when such a declaration was apparently to declare oneself on the side of all immorality and wickedness. But it was not so in the days when she first avowed Atheism to be the conscientious conclusion of her intellect. In those days no one may know how much of scorn, contempt, and superciliousness she had to endure for her honesty.

Yet steadily, unrestingly, with calm undismay, Mrs. Rose has bravely faced all this coldness, this contempt, this contumely. Freedom, equality—for white and black, for native and foreigner, for king and subject, for priest and devotee, for male and female—that is the broad basis of her creed—a creed too all-embracing to be hampered or pandered to by the prejudices of others. To enlighten and to free all slaves—that has been the object of Mrs. Rose's life and labors. Slaves of race, slaves of faith, slaves of sex—it mattered not—to each she preached from the same text, "Knowledge—Liberty."

Nor has she found the life of a disciple of liberty a rose-bestrewn path. She has met with discouragements, rebuffs, slights, sneers; insults, from those opposed to her; and has been misunderstood and maligned by even those who called themselves her friends and colaborers. But she has shown the steadfastness of her faith in the ultimate triumph of the cause she had espoused by her constant laboring for it, in the face of all these disheartenings. Her motto seems to have ever been that of the German poet—

“Haste not, rest not—calmly wait,  
Meekly bear the storms of fate;  
Duty be thy polar guide—  
*Do the right, whate'er betide.*”

“In the winter of '37,” she says, in an article published in the *New York Revolution*, “when soliciting names for a petition to the Legislature to give married women the right to hold real estate in their own name, I was met with, ‘I have rights enough’; or, ‘The gentlemen will laugh at

me,' from the women; and 'They have already too many rights,' from the men. And so our first petition was graced by only five signatures; but perseverance, year after year, with increased petitions and names, obtained in 1849 the boon that gave married women the right to hold *what belonged to them*, in their own name."

So from the first she never allowed herself to be discouraged in any undertaking by which she hoped to effect a reform. She fearlessly attached her full signature to the articles from her pen, which frequently graced the columns of the Boston *Investigator*, an avowedly infidel and atheistic publication; and in her lectures she as fearlessly attacked the clergy, and the proslavery men, as if her views were among the most popular and general of those held by the masses.

"Once," M. D. Conway tells this of her, "she went down South, and after being there a little time, her soul was stirred at what she saw going on in the fair city of

Charleston. So she advertised that she would publicly lecture the Charlestonians. The novelty of a woman appearing in public attracted a large audience, who were amazed and overwhelmed to hear her rate them about slavery in a way that could hardly have been surpassed by that Mr. Garrison on whose head they had set a price. It was due partly to her sex, and partly to the paralysis caused by her audacity, that she was not torn to pieces; as it was, it required considerable influence to get her safely out of the city."

A letter written by John Wattles during the Woman's Rights Convention, held in the Tabernacle, New York city, September 10, 1853, mentions the presence of Mrs. Rose, and speaks of her in this wise :

"Ernestine L. Rose — eloquent, pungent, cogent, and clear-sighted; before her thought, oppression recoils like demons before the armies of light, shrieking for help, and crying 'torment us not.'"

In all her earnest labor for the liberty she loved, and the increase of that knowledge which she knew to be so essential to the dissemination of the first principles of that liberty, Mrs. Rose has yet never truckled to popular opinion, or tried to win popular applause at the expense of the cause she advocated. And this firmness has been with a full understanding of the results to herself, as the following words from her pen will show :

“All whose great desire is to ‘stand well with the people’ know full well that the secret of their success consists in swimming with the current—in not being too far in advance of society ; and so in their writings and speeches they give the people, not what they most need and ought to hear, but what would be most acceptable to the pride, vanity, or interest of their hearers or readers. At times a step in advance is very desirable to attract by the novelty of the position, but they take good care not to go too far, lest existing preju-

dices should throw them off the track. This is called, by many, good, worldly philosophy, and it may be, but I can give no other name than ignorance, or moral cowardice, which hinders far more than it advances the progress of the race."

In 1855 or '56, Mrs. Rose made a short visit to England and France, where she renewed her acquaintance with many of the leaders of opinion in both countries, and formed many new and appreciative friendships.

For a number of years after her return to America her health was so poor and uncertain that she was obliged to forbear taking much active part in the reforms so dear to her. But she had the happy consciousness of having done much of the hard pioneer work which had helped to make those reforms practicable and attractive. And she was not forced into quietude until the shackles had fallen from the black race forever, nor until public attention was at last so widely awake to the wrongs inflicted

upon woman that there was no fear of its again relapsing into lethargy on the subject until those wrongs were redressed. So, too, she has lived to see honest doubt treated with respectful consideration: argued with, and made concessions to, instead of being sneered at and anathematized.

About three years ago the state of her health required a change from this climate to the more congenial English climate. Before her departure from New York, a number of her friends testified their admiration and esteem for her, and their appreciation of her past services, by an offering, comparatively small, perhaps, in pecuniary value, but worth a great deal as an expression of sincere regard and appreciation.

Her health, since her residence in England, has steadily improved, and we again hear of the active part she has been taking in the causes of Freethought and Woman Suffrage. We hear of lectures, addresses, and speeches from her, which show that with the return of health the old fire

and force of youth has returned, improved by the ripened wisdom of a matured intellect.

That she is still capable of rousing and interesting audiences by her graceful eloquence, her cogent reasoning, and powerful wit, the respectful and laudatory notices she wins on these occasions from the English press show conclusively. One of these says: "If we may accept her as a type of what the ladies will become when they have the rights in question conceded them, the men most assuredly will have to look to their oratorical laurels."

"Mrs. Ernestine L. Rose, of New York," writes Mr. Conway from London to the *Cincinnati Commercial*, "has been staying with her husband in the dignified and fashionable old town of Bath. By a local journal I learn that a startling episode occurred at a public meeting concerning the new School Board held there. An amiable lady, who disapproved of women being on the board, sent up to the chairman, to have read, a silly letter, written by Miss Burdett-

Coutts, reproving the female aspirants for places on the board. Whereupon a fine-looking, middle-aged lady arose, ascended the platform, and, with that practiced ability which those who know Mrs. Rose will easily imagine, made a speech on the woman question generally, which fairly revolutionized the meeting."

The London *National Reformer* thus notices her address at a Conference of the Woman's Suffrage movement in that city:

"The speech of the meeting was, however, made by a lady whose name will be familiar to all readers of the Boston *Investigator*. We mean Mrs. Ernestine L. Rose, of New York. The good old lady with her white curls, her erect, healthy-looking body, her clear, distinct voice, her occasional quaint phrases, her stern determination, and her real genius as a speaker, won from those present a far more hearty and lengthened tribute of applause than was accorded to anyone else."

In an article entitled "A Legend of

Good Women," appearing without signature in the *Golden Age*, but which, nevertheless, bears traces of the pleasant airiness of style peculiar to the editor of that paper, occurs this kindly tribute to the worth of Mrs. Rose :

“Ernestine L. Rose, who is now out of the country, is one of the ablest of female minds. Foreign by birth, and revealing her Polish extraction in her accent, she, nevertheless, speaks the English tongue with a rare force and eloquence, and handles her logic as deftly as her needle. Radical in her religious views — called by some an Atheist, and by others an Infidel—she has been considered as a dangerous character—a kind of Thomas Paine among her sisterhood. But as I am a believer in all honest religions, and have a profound reverence for all sincere souls, I have nothing to say against Mrs. Rose’s Infidelity, which is itself a religion, nor against her character, which, in spite of her own testimony to the contrary, I know to be thoroughly Christian.”

The editor of the Boston *Investigator* prefaces one of her latest and best speeches on Woman's Rights with the following words :

“In Edinburgh (Scotland), on the evening of January 27, 1873, a large public meeting, in favor of Woman's Suffrage, was held. On the platform were a number of distinguished personages, ladies as well as gentlemen. The Lord Provost presided, and among the speakers — we don't know but that we may say *the* speaker — was our worthy and able Liberal sister and correspondent, Mrs. Ernestine L. Rose. Her speech on the occasion, as reported in the *Edinburgh Daily Review*, abounds with all the pleasant wit, strong argument, and conclusive reasoning, that have long rendered her one of the best female orators of the day.”

In her own person, as one of the most truly womanly, and yet as one who is well calculated to take an active part in all public matters, Mrs. Rose presents a

striking example of the truthfulness of the following part of her Edinburgh speech :

“It was a puerile and frivolous argument that woman, if she got the franchise, would cease to be womanly. Did a man cease to be manly when he got the franchise? She might become stronger in mind, more faithful to convictions; she might become more intellectual; she might take a greater and wider view of the duties and responsibilities of life; but would that unsex her? would that change her nature? would she be less a mother, less a sister, less a woman? No! Believe, trust in the right, do rightly, do justly, and leave all the consequences to themselves.”

Mrs. Rose has returned, or is about to return, to this country, the land of her love and adoption. She is now sixty-six years of age, and can only look forward to a few more years of active life. The prospect now looks bright that she may live, however, to see the dearest wish of her heart accomplished — the complete enfran-

chisement of her sex in America. Let us hope that when that day comes, it will find her with the strong intellect undimmed by the long years of waiting, and the brave heart as fresh in its love for liberty as it is to-day. When we remember that Mrs. Rose is by birth a Pole, and by descent and education a Jew—a people that has been wronged and trampled upon, and a faith which has been for ages persecuted and maligned—we can understand whence comes her ardor for freedom, her eloquent earnestness in the cause of liberty and equality. She is an ardent patriot, although she has long been absent from her beloved Poland, and I remember well how she startled and electrified the members of the Universal Peace Society, in the midst of their mild platitudes and millennial dreams, by her description of the sort of peace *she* advocated—a peace bought with the sword! And with eyes flashing, her pale cheeks flushing, and her voice thrilling, she declared how she longed to plunge with her own hand, if

need be, the dagger to the hearts of the enemies of her country's liberty and rights. Indeed, it is told of her that once when an insurrection broke out in Poland, soon after she first went to England, and while she was yet a young girl, she set out to return to Poland, hoping in her enthusiasm to find some way by which to aid her countrymen in their struggle; but she was stopped by the authorities at Coblenz, and was reluctantly obliged to return.



FRANCES POWER COBBE.



FRANCES POWER COBBE.

MISS COBBE, the friend and disciple of Theodore Parker, has placed herself, by her "Intuitive Morals" and "Darwinism in Morals," so completely outside of churches and creeds; that I could not feel as though justice had been done to a brave, true woman if she were not here given the recognition she deserves—a place among those of her sex who stand on the same plane of advanced thought as herself, although some of these are doubtless far more radical in their views than she has yet professed herself to be: her position, as I understand it, being that of the most liberal phase of Unitarianism; or, perhaps, more correctly, that of a Free Relig-

ionist ; for Miss Cobbe, in spite of her advanced Liberalism, is a most reverent Theist.

It is so recently that her name has become conspicuous in literature, that the press has not yet given that publicity to all the minor details of her previous life which it will probably yet give, and which is necessary to make even a condensed biographical sketch of any interest to the general public ; but in this, I shall be only able to embody the odds and ends which have heretofore floated into various newspaper and magazine notices concerning her.

From these I have gleaned that she is a finely-educated, large-hearted, genial-natured Irish gentlewoman. What the influences were, outside of her own good sense and discriminating intellect, which led her to discard sectarianism in religion, I have had no means of finding out. The writings of Theodore Parker seem to have first produced a deep effect upon her mind by their broad, large-hearted views concerning God and humanity. From them she learned

to look upon the Christ as an Exemplar, rather than as a Mediator, and to dare to believe in God as all-powerful, and to see that Devil and Hell were words only, having no basis in reality.

For this teacher of morals, whom she had never seen, Miss Cobbe conceived a deep and worshipful reverence and tender regard. She sought by correspondence with him to understand and define more fully his broad, liberal, loving views, concerning the relations between God and man. This correspondence was continued at intervals for several years, and was only broken by the death of Mr. Parker.

Although a meeting with Theodore Parker was greatly desired by Miss Cobbe, and she was traveling through Europe about the same time that he was, yet circumstances constantly thwarted this desire until he was on his deathbed. Miss Cobbe arrived in Florence, Italy, just a few days previous to his death. She, however, ventured to call on him. Their meeting was, under the cir-

cumstances, deeply affecting. The disciple, however, thus gained a glorious opportunity of seeing for herself how sincere the teacher's faith was in that which he had taught. Much conversation was impossible, from Parker's weakness, but she found him calm, serene, peacefully happy — not desirous of death, but resigned to the inevitable. She remembered his well known passion for flowers, and brought him a lovely bouquet of fresh tea-roses and lilies, with which he was very much pleased. He presented her in return with a beautiful bronze inkstand, from whose depths the inspiration which guided her "Intuitive Morals" may possibly have arisen.

I think she had only that one interview with him; he failed rapidly, and, within a few days, the active mind, the large heart, of the earnest teacher were at rest forever. Miss Cobbe was among those who followed him — sincere mourners, all — to his grave in the Protestant burial-ground at Florence. She afterward evidenced her great

esteem for him by editing his Life and Letters.

In these letters he mentions Miss Cobbe often and favorably, seeming to appreciate her intellectual and moral qualities highly, as they deserved. In a letter addressed to George Ripley, he speaks thus enthusiastically concerning her:

“Thank you for the kind and just things you say about Miss Cobbe. My friends the Hunts and Apthorps almost worship the maiden. I keep her birthday as one of my domestic holidays, and honor the fourth of December with unusual libations.”

Indeed, Miss Cobbe seems to have the faculty of inspiring and keeping friendship in an extraordinary degree. Her own cordial warm-heartedness and sunny disposition is probably largely the cause of this.

Moncure D. Conway, in a letter to the *Round Table*, thus describes her personal appearance:

“The first impression she makes is that of a great mass of merry flesh and blood,

weighing nearly three hundred and fifty pounds. She too often has to walk on crutches, which gives one a sad feeling that this enormous size is far from being the result of, or accompanied by, health. But when one converses with Miss Cobbe, he finds that the chief characteristic of her face and expression is delicacy. There is a lambent humor about her mouth, a subtle perceptiveness blended with sweetness about the eye, a sensitiveness and sensibility in her manner, under which—as conversation and acquaintance go on—the corpulency seems to shrink and the most charming physiognomy to be unsheathed. Miss Cobbe has an extraordinary power of conversation, is one of the wittiest of mortals, and wherever she appears has about her a group of fascinated young people—particularly of her own sex—by whose bursts of merriment one may know on entering a company where the authoress of ‘*Intuitive Morals*’ is seated.”

Kate Field says of her: “Miss Cobbe is the embodiment of genial philanthropy;

as delightful a companion as she is heroic in her great work of social reform."

I hope that she may live to do yet more effective work in liberalizing public sentiment than she has done even by her "Intuitive Morals," though I am far from underestimating the value of this excellent work. It has done, and is destined to do, a great work in awakening thought in that great multitude who, though loving the light better than darkness, have yet been content to accept their faith second-handed from those who have set themselves up as their teachers, without inquiry from the taught as to the validity of such self-asserted claims. It does not lead entirely out of the darkness of Biblical theology and religious prejudice, but it is a long step toward the light. It needed a large amount of moral courage in any one professing to be a believer in Christianity, much more in a woman belonging to refined and cultivated Christian circles, to make the daring avowals contained in this book. The intellect which

has reasoned itself so far out of the intricacies and bewilderments of the Christian faith has certainly within it the force to probe much deeper than even this book goes into the reason of things. We confidently expect Miss Cobbe, if she lives, to take a yet more daring and advanced stand as a liberal thinker than even "Darwinism in Morals" shows, of which hope that title is suggestive, as indicative of development in thought as in all things else.

From "Intuitive Morals" we extract the following thoughts, as demonstrating Miss Cobbe's ability as a writer, and the pure, true humanitarianism of her religious conclusions:

"Like the clown, who believes that cold and darkness are something positive, and not merely the negations of caloric and light, we give to evil an affirmative existence—nay, a personified one. We believe that the universe contains not only One absolutely good, but also One absolutely evil; not only a God, but a Devil. But

these are visions of the night. The universe has indeed a sun of light and heat, but it has no sun with rays of darkness and frost."

"Let us do justice to humanity. The removal of all fear for the future destiny of our fellow-creatures is the removal of a nightmare. It was not only while the thunder-cloud hung over our own heads that it darkened our sky. Some natures are so hopeful and loving that they never know fear of hell for themselves. But it is when the lurid gloom has rolled utterly away from our horizon that we know how it blackened the Universe; and then only can we see the true splendor of the sun, throned, not in 'clouds and darkness,' but in a heaven of unshadowed light."

"Morality may exist in an Atheist without any religion, and in a Theist with a religion quite unspiritual."

"Were the boasted logic of Calvin really carried out to its practical consequences, his disciples could recognize no *law*; for to the Elect, obedience is involun-

tary, and to the Reprobate impossible. They could adore no God, for the character they ascribe to the Creator is one which the nature the true God has given them forces them to abhor."

"What! Shall we despise a *man* who acts justly or benevolently, merely for the sake of admiration, and shall we dare to attribute such a motive to the infinitely Pure? Shall we condemn a man (a *man* who has equals for admirers) if he build an almshouse for the sake of applause? and shall we venture to affirm that He, whose ineffable happiness could not be increased by the united hallelujahs of the created Universe, has yet designed and built the starry heavens for no more noble a purpose?"

GEORGE ELIOT.



## GEORGE ELIOT.

(MRS. LEWES.)

IT is with a feeling of considerable deprecating delicacy that I venture to write of this woman, whom I so much admire. She has been heretofore so persistently reserved and reticent as to her past life that I cannot avoid feeling as if this sketch were almost an unwarranted infringement upon the personal privacy she so evidently courts. But this series of sketches would not be anything like what I wish it to be with this eminent name omitted; and although my materials for the sketch are necessarily scant and incomplete, yet I feel assured that the little I have been able to glean in regard to her antecedents will be of in-

terest to all those who care at all to read these brief biographies.

“Who was her father?  
Who was her mother?  
Had she a sister?  
Had she a brother?”—

are questions which I am wholly unprepared to answer. Of her birth and youth I have been unable to glean any definite information. One newspaper paragraph states that she is the only daughter of a poor but learned clergyman, who educated her himself thoroughly in the classics and sciences. Another, with less appearance of reliability, declares her to be the ward and adopted daughter of her warm friend and admirer Herbert Spencer, and that it is to his tuition and companionship that she owes her thorough education. Neither of these stories is, perhaps, correct. All that we do know certainly of her youth are the facts that her maiden name was Marian Evans, and that she has a thorough and classical education; and so must have enjoyed from

childhood superior advantages to obtain such education, in addition to her wonderful natural genius and philosophical bent of mind; for although genius is a gift of nature, yet without opportunity, industry, and perseverance, it is a gift thrown away upon its possessor.

“Few indeed are the beings who have ever combined so many high qualities in one person as Mrs. Lewes does,” says Justin McCarthy, in his sketch of her in his “Modern Leaders”: “she is an accomplished linguist, a brilliant talker, a musician of extraordinary skill. She has a musical sense so delicate and exquisite that there are tender, simple, true ballad melodies which fill her with a pathetic pain almost too keen to bear; and yet she has the firm, strong command of tone and touch without which a really scientific musician cannot be made. I do not think this exceeding sensibility of nature is often to be found in combination with a genuine mastery of the practical science of music. But

Mrs. Lewes has mastered many sciences, as well as literatures. Probably no other novelist, since novel-writing became a business, ever possessed one tithe of her scientific knowledge. . . . Mrs. Lewes is all genius and culture. Had she never written a page of fiction, nay, had she never written a line of poetry or prose, she must have been regarded with wonder and admiration by all who knew her, as a woman of vast and varied knowledge — a woman who could think deeply and talk brilliantly, who could play high and severe classical music like a professional performer, and could bring forth the most delicate and tender aroma of nature and poetry, lying deep in the heart of some simple, old-fashioned Scotch or English ballad.”

Some fourteen or sixteen years ago I remember taking up Feuerbach's “Essence of Christianity,” and noting the name of Miss Marian Evans as the English translator thereof. My curiosity was at once aroused as to who this woman was, whose name

I had never before heard. It seemed almost marvelous that any woman could feel interested enough in this deep philosophical German work, with its boldly-avowed Atheism, and its mysticism of expression, to translate it into our blunt, direct English language. Few men at that time would have dared or proved equal to the task, and it was certainly strange work for a woman to choose, from a feeling of fitness for the work, or from a sense of pleasure in her undertaking. I looked eagerly for some further mention of this unknown Marian Evans, and found it a few days later on the title-page of another heterodox German work, Strauss' "Life of Jesus," of which she is the translator. But this meager mention only whetted, without in the least alleviating, my curiosity in regard to her. I wished so much to know more of her. Was she young? Did she compose as well as translate? Was Marian Evans her real name? Was she known anywhere as a writer? These were the ques-

tions I asked over and over, but it was some years later before I found any reply to them. She was evidently, from her unpopular choice of works to translate into English, a Freethinker herself, as well as a *thinker*.

I had known and admired the novelist George Eliot for several years, as the author of "Adam Bede," and "The Mill on the Floss," before I came to know that George Eliot and Marian Evans, my unknown translator, were one and the same person. Marian Evans had been to me the greater mystery. Why I had never heard more of her than as the translator of these two philosophical German books puzzled me. I felt that she must have a strong individuality, from the fact that she had dared to make her public appearance as a translator of heretical and unorthodox works; and it was with a sense of supreme satisfaction that I found her at last—a woman—one of my own sex—and a George Eliot! I gloried in the reality of her literary power, and in her grandeur of genius, as if

she had been a near and personal friend, instead of an entire stranger, whom I had neither seen, nor ever expected to see. And because she is a woman, and has proved herself so great, and in proving herself so has demonstrated the capabilities of her sex to all the world, I have continued to glory in every fresh triumph she has since achieved. And I am the more proud of her that she has dared to throw off those shackles of superstition and bigotry which weigh so much heavier on women than on men; and has with quiet, unassuming strength of character dared to own herself a Positivist and a Freethinker.

Miss Evans began her literary career as translator and essayist. Her first contributions to magazine literature appeared in the *Westminster Review*, edited by Dr. John Chapman, and awakened considerable attention from their force and polish. After awhile she became assistant editor of that magazine, residing in the family of the editor-in-chief. Here she was necessarily

brought into personal acquaintance with many literary people as well as philosophical writers. It was in Dr. Chapman's home that she first formed that acquaintance with George Henry Lewes, already a well-known and popular writer, which finally deepened into love, and culminated in their union for life. Here, too, she met Herbert Spencer, and other radical and earnest thinkers.

Miss Evans' first attempts at fiction-writing were the series of short stories and sketches, now known under the title of "Scenes of Clerical Life," published in serial form in magazines.

Previous to this she had been known only as a translator and writer of essays and reviews. Of her original writings she seems to have had no very high opinion. "For years," she remarked to a friend, "I wrote reviews because I knew so little of humanity."

It was not until the publication of "Adam Bede" by the Harpers, a little more than a dozen years ago, that a new

writer, whose *nom de plume* was George Eliot, began to attract the attention of American readers. In England, Thackeray had already spoken of her as "a literary star of the first magnitude just risen on the horizon"; but her fame was not assured until after the publication of "Adam Bede," which she sold to the publishers of *Blackwood's Magazine* for £300; and, to their credit be it told, when they found that it was for them a successful venture, and likely to remain such, they presented her with £1,500 more, as her share of the proceeds of its sale.

The pseudonym of "George Eliot," under which she first appeared as a novelist, and the careful assumption of masculinity throughout the pages of "Adam Bede," while it puzzled and led astray the public as to her identity, did not long deceive as to her sex. The woman's tender heart and keen sense of injustice made palpable the true woman's nature all through her book. Theodore Parker, writing to Frances

Power Cobbe, in 1859, remarks: "I am reading 'Adam Bede,' a quite extraordinary book. But I wonder that any one should have doubted that a woman wrote it. Strange is it that we tell the universal part of our history in all that we write!"

Since the publication of "Adam Bede," every successive work from the pen of George Eliot has intensified the interest excited by that work, and strengthened public opinion in its first estimate of her literary ability. Her late effort, "Middlemarch," is causing her name to occupy the chief place in literary reviews, and sets the seal upon her as the greatest of living novelists. Even previous to its appearance, the *Chicago Evening Journal*, in an elaborate and carefully-prepared editorial on woman's genius, gives her this high praise: "It is undoubtedly in the genius of George Eliot that English womanhood has its largest and most wonderful illustration. There are no novels in English literature which can be compared with hers for that

which is by far the best feature of a good novel—thorough appreciation of the deeper meaning of human life, of the divine laws which underlie, and penetrate, and overshadow, human experience. It would not be easy to name anything written since Shakespeare and Milton more thoroughly alive with great moral passion, more instinct with the consciousness that righteousness is the soul of the Universe, than George Eliot's sketches of human life as we have them in her novels. She is a preacher greater than any in the Established pulpits of England, and will be remembered and read after men shall have ceased to preserve the recollections of the discussions and controversies which now fill the English ecclesiastical State."

George Wm. Curtis says of her that, "for all the higher qualities of the story-teller; for sustained imagination, insight, knowledge, and exquisite skill of narration—the woman who writes under the name of George Eliot is the master of all living men."

Mr. John Morley says that "no woman has ever impressed him so profoundly as George Eliot; there is something almost apostolic in her moral character, while her intellect is of the first order."

Richard Grant White finishes a critique of "Middlemarch" thus: "Of George Eliot herself our final and summary judgment is that in her the introspective spirit of the age has become incarnate, and attained its completest development."

How much of passionate pain her life has held; what disappointments, what sorrows, what baulked aims, what unsatisfied desires, what hopeless loves, what terrible struggles—we do not know, and may not even guess. But that these things have been in her life her writings bear ample witness. However sympathetic her nature may be, and however observing her mind, no sympathy, nor any power of observation, can supply, without bitter personal experience, the keen, sympathetic knowledge she displays in her portrayal of all these. She has been taught

the shades of meaning in all these in the school of experience—a school which to her high, grand nature, her keen susceptibilities, has been a thousandfold more thorough in its teachings than we duller scholars have found it. Does she not herself confess as much when in “Felix Holt” she says: “The poets have told us of a dolorous enchanted forest in the under world. The thorn-bushes there, and the thick-barked stems, have human histories hidden in them; the power of unuttered cries dwells in the passionless-sceming branches, and the red, warm blood is darkly feeding the quivering nerves of a sleepless memory, that watches through all dreams. These things are a parable.”

The one romance in George Eliot's life which she has found it impossible to keep from the inquisitive world is the romance which culminated in her marriage to a kindred spirit, Mr. George Henry Lewes, himself a power in the literary world. I say her marriage, although it is well known

that by force of circumstances it was for many years a marriage to which the law refused its sanction, though in every other respect a true, pure, honorable union—a union which demanded from both the parties high courage and faith in each other to venture upon. If, however, marriage means anything more than a formula of words, theirs is one of the truest of marriages, which the legal ties that now unite them do not render one whit more binding.

Until she had passed the first buoyancy, brightness, and bloom of youth, Mrs. Lewes was unknown. The world never knew the girl Marian Evans; and what beauty, if any, she had ever possessed belonged not to the world's George Eliot, for she is described by many as being positively homely; while even her friends and admirers soften the truth in loving phrase. The nearest approach to praise of her personal appearance which I have ever seen I find in a letter of Moncure D. Conway to *The Round Table*, in which he says: "What Margaret

Fuller's father said of her when she was a girl — '*incedit regina*' — may be said of the mature woman who writes under the name of George Eliot. She is a finely-shaped woman, and quite large, though not in the sense in which Hawthorne describes English female largeness. She is by no means corpulent, nor are there any suggestions of steaks and sirloins about her, but she is of large skeleton. She is not meager, either, but has the look of being made out of fine clay. She is blonde, with very light auburn hair; clear, serene, smiling eyes; beautiful teeth. She has also gracious and easy manners, with an undefinable air of unworldliness—of having been made for large and fine societies, but never entered them. In a word, she is a woman who, though not handsome, would personally satisfy her most ardent admirers."

A writer in the *Atlantic Monthly* for December, 1864 (Miss Kate Field, I think), who met Mrs. Lewes in Italy, describes her thus :

“It was at Villino Trollope that we first saw that wonderfully clever author, George Eliot. She is a woman of forty, perhaps, of large frame, and fair Saxon coloring. In heaviness of jaw, and height of cheek-bone, she greatly resembles a German; nor are her features unlike those of Wordsworth, judging from his pictures. The expression of her face is gentle and amiable, and her manner is particularly timid and retiring. In conversation Mrs. Lewes is most entertaining.”

It is asserted that she is nervously sensitive as to her lack of beauty, and will not on that account consent to sit for any kind of picture; but I am inclined to doubt as to her refusal being in consequence of this feeling; it, more probably, is the result of that modesty which is so charming and beautiful a trait in her character, a modesty which will not permit her to do anything which may appear like self-glorification; which lets the world seek her out, if so be it thinks her worthy of being sought after,

but which will always prevent her from trying to make herself in any way conspicuous, save by those works which are the natural expression and outlet of a deep, grand, philosophical nature, the emanations of a true genius. It was that same modesty which prevented her from avowing her sex or name until success crowned her work, and genuine admiration inquisitively ferreted her out, through all disguise.

Her position on the *Westminster Review*, and residence in the family of its chief, rendered her accessible to those who frequented Dr. Chapman's house. Among those who availed themselves of the privilege was George Henry Lewes, whose philosophical writings had previously won her respect. The intimate friendliness into which their mutual likings drew them resulted first in his hearty admiration of her as a thinker; then in his ardent love and tenderness for her as a pure, grand woman. But there were obstacles to their union even when he found that she reciprocated his passion. He was

peculiarly situated: He was a married man, although for long years he had not lived with his wife. His wife was living with another man, for the marriage had been an uncongenial one, and the first Mrs. Lewes had proved false to her marriage vows; "but," says a writer in the *Golden Age*, "Mr. Lewes himself was equally guilty of infidelity to his wife, and the law of England does this equal justice to man and woman, viz., it absolves neither from a marriage bond, on account of the infidelity of the other, unless the one who asks freedom can claim to have been faithful to his or her own vow. The marriage tie between this disloyal husband and wife was broken in fact, but not in law. They had long lived separate lives, when Mr. Lewes met and loved Miss Evans. It was her mind and heart which first won Mr. Lewes' love, and the nobility of this most pure spirit lifted that love into a reverence he had never before felt for woman. His love was returned, and the ques-

tion of their future was discussed by these loving friends and friendly lovers. They asked the advice of the wisest and best of their friends in this emergency, and at last, after much thought and discussion, it was decided by themselves and their counsellors that this being an exceptional case, it must be dealt with in an exceptional manner. A legal marriage between them was impossible, but since the affection which united them was no mere youthful passion, but the stable bond of a love founded on mutual congeniality and respect, they would be justified in uniting their lives outside of the law, if they were strong enough to bear the social consequences which must naturally follow from the infraction of the law.

“This they resolved to do, and from that time they have lived happily, contentedly, and helpfully together. All their friends approve of their course, and no truer wife to her husband, no more tender mother to his children — for she has none of her own —

is to be found in all England than this brave and true woman."

Thus far testifies the nameless writer in the *Golden Age* concerning their marriage. But other and later writers in regard to this matter, writing since the death of the first Mrs. Lewes and the legal marriage of George Eliot to Mr. Lewes, give a different version of the story; averring that after Mr. Lewes had, with rare generosity, forgiven his former wife's first sin against him and taken her back to his heart and home, she again eloped with another lover, and the English law debarred him from a divorce. The *Golden Age* writer may be mistaken as to the children of George Lewes, as nowhere else have I ever seen any mention of children by either marriage, though there can be no doubt that one who can portray so vividly as she does the true depths of maternal love would make a devoted mother, or stepmother, even.

When they thus joined their fates together, both were mature in years and in

experience of the world ; both in the possession of their ripest genius. That she, at least, thinks this riper love as rich in blessing as the vaunted love of youth, witness this question occurring in "Adam Bede":

"How is it that the poets have said so many fine things about our first love, so few about our later love? Are their first poems their best? or, are not those which come from their fuller thought, their larger experience, their deeper-rooted affections? The boy's flute-like voice has its own Spring charm ; but the man's should yield a deeper, richer music."

Mr. and Mrs. Lewes have not, since their marriage, sought, or cared for, recognition by society. Indeed, on the contrary; Mrs. Lewes shrinks from any overflow of the outside world into her quiet, busy, loving home. The few who know and love them thoroughly, who have largeness enough of heart and brain to make them forget that in their union there is anything but obedience to that which is fittest, in whose

society complete oneness of aim is felt, and that aim self-improvement and the happiness of others—these true, congenial friends are the only ones admitted or welcomed to their home circle, and these are all-sufficing for their need of friendship. If there be outside sneerers at their marriage, world-people who feel that a marriage such as this is an outrage upon and a detriment to "society," they keep themselves too far apart from such to be hurt or annoyed by what they may say or think.

Of George Henry Lewes, Justin McCarthy speaks as follows :

"What man of our day has done so many things, and done them so well? He is the biographer of Goethe and Robespierre; he has compiled the "History of Philosophy," in which he has something really his own to say of every great philosopher, from Thales to Schelling; he has translated Spinoza; he has published various scientific works; he has written at least two novels; he has made one of the

most successful dramatic adaptations known to our stage ; he is an accomplished theatrical critic. . . . Mr. Lewes was always remarkable for a frank and fearless self-conceit, which by its very sincerity and audacity almost disarmed criticism."

Mr. Lewes, having been born in 1817, is, at the present time, about fifty-nine years of age, while George Eliot is not more than two or three years his junior, perhaps not even so much, and he is said to be even less favored in the matter of personal beauty than she is—so that in these respects they are on an equal footing. That their union is a happy one no one seems to doubt.

I have called George Eliot a Free-thinker. In the best sense of that much-abused word, I think she can truly be called so ; but her freedom of thought has not raised within her mind any desire to curtail or circumscribe the thoughts or opinions of any one else. She is no *image-breaker* ; rather by sweet persuasiveness, or the gentlest of ridicule, does she endeavor

to show us that our images are senseless, hideous daubs of clay, instead of the immortal gods we had taken them for; and so shame us into putting them aside, of our own free-will. She evinces none of that animosity toward religionists or the clergy which is, unhappily, too often a trait of those who dissent from the doctrines and dogmas of orthodoxy. For the clergy, indeed, she shows often a tender, reverent feeling of pity, as toward a misunderstood, much-abused class of men, rather than any disposition to brand them as willful hypocrites, and wolves in sheep's clothing. She aims ever to show the folly and weakness of the belief, instead of the sins and shortcomings of the believers.

What a writer says of Mr. Lewes is equally true of his wife, viz., "that he is a thorough skeptic and disputer of the supernatural; and we have little doubt that he has done more than any other two men living in his time in England to diffuse skepticism—especially among the refined and

cultivated classes. This he has effected by the inferential, as distinguished from the explicit, character of his teachings."

While there is in the writings of George Eliot no direct attack upon the Christianity of to-day, no outright declaration of antipathy toward its teachings, such as would shock or hurt the feelings of any sincere believer, yet there runs through them all an under-current of liberal and inquiring thought, calculated to suggest and encourage inquiry. Perhaps she makes Felix Holt express her views in regard to this matter better than I could hope to, in his reply to Esther Lyon's retaliatory queries, after he had taken her to task for the uselessness of her life :

"Why do you read this mawkish stuff on a Sunday, for example?" he said, snatching up 'Rene,' and running his eye over the pages.

"Why don't *you* always go to Chapel, Mr. Holt, and read Howe's "Living Temple," and join the church?"

“There’s just the difference between us—I know why I don’t do these things. I distinctly see that I can do better. I have other principles, and should sink myself by doing what I don’t recognize as the best.”

All through her works we can open the pages at random, and find passages expressive of her lack of faith in churches and creeds, similar to these quiet sarcasms, from “Felix Holt”:

“There was no sign of superstition near, no crucifix or image to indicate a misguided reverence; the inhabitants were probably so free from superstition that they were in much less awe of the parson than of the overseer. Yet they were saved from the excesses of Protestantism by not knowing how to read. They were kept safely in the *via media* of indifference, and could have registered themselves in the census by a big black mark as members of the Church of England.”

And again: “He did not grapple with the paradox; he let it pass with all the

discreetness of an experienced theologian or learned scholiast; preferring to point his whip at some object which could raise no questions."

Her portrayal of Bulstrode's character and religion in "Middlemarch" is eminently characteristic of her charitable judgment, and of her keen insight into human nature. I give two or three extracts:

"There may be coarse hypocrites who consciously affect beliefs and emotions, but Bulstrode was not one of them. He was simply a man whose desires had been stronger than his theoretic beliefs, and who had gradually explained the gratification of his desires into satisfactory agreement with those beliefs. If this be hypocrisy, it is a process which shows itself occasionally in us all, to whatever confession we belong, and whether we believe in the future perfection of the race, or in the nearest date fixed for the end of the world; whether we regard the earth as a purifying nidus for a saved remnant, including ourselves,

or have a passionate belief in the solidarity of mankind."

. . . "His belief in these moments of dread was, that if he spontaneously did something right, God would save him from the consequences of wrongdoing. For religion can only change when the emotions which fill it are changed, and the religion of personal fear remains nearly at the level of the savage."

. . . "Does any one suppose that private prayer is necessarily candid—necessarily goes to the roots of actions? Private prayer is inaudible speech, and speech is representative. Who can represent himself just as he is, even in his own reflections."

One of George Eliot's critics has said that "her nature is decidedly religious," and I am inclined to agree with him in this opinion. But the religion of a nature like hers is not the religion which is usually understood by that word—it is the higher, broader, profounder "religion of humanity"; which cares nothing for sects, or

forms, or creeds; which ignores priesthòods and dogmas, and cares only for the moral and physical welfare of her fellow-men. Both herself and Mr. Lewes are said to be followers of Auguste Comte, but they are of those who can never become "followers" of any one man or creed, though it is doubtless true that in the philosophy of Comte they find the nearest assimilation to their own philosophical conclusions.

George Eliot's literary success has been remarkably rapid. Wonderfully so, when we consider the multitude of new novelists who demand attention, and the long list of romance writers whose names we forget from year to year. To make so decided an impression on the public mind in such an era of fiction-writing speaks volumes for her fitness for her chosen work. Yet hers has not been an easily won, easily earned fame. For years before her success, she had served a long, faithful, and apparently ill-paid apprenticeship to her vocation as writer for the press; but at last came her reward

and appreciation, and, if she is not already, she soon will be placed above the need of writing for pecuniary gain. Let us hope that her love for her work will prevent competence from paralyzing her ready pen, and active, vigorous brain.

The following list comprises her published works up to this date :

“Scenes of Clerical Life.”

“Adam Bede.”

“The Mill on the Floss.”

“Felix Holt, the Radical.”

“Romola.”

“The Spanish Gypsy.” (A poem.)

“The Legend of Jubal, and Other Poems.”

“Middlemarch.”

The last-mentioned work is thought by her critics to be her best, also. For myself, I think “Romola” shows her varied genius in the strongest light. She is yet in the prime of her intellectual life, and capable of giving her admirers new lessons and new delight.

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